

THE CRITERIA OF BIBLICAL CANONICITY
IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY
LUTHERAN, ROMAN CATHOLIC, AND REFORMED THEOLOGY

by
Ralph A. Bohlmann

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SUMMARY

This study presents a comprehensive survey of the major sixteenth century treatments of the biblical canon, with special emphasis on the criteria employed in determining the status of books included in the church's received collection of sacred writings. It not only traces the history of the canon in the sixteenth century, but illustrates important areas of interconfessional agreement and disagreement in attempting to solve the problem of authority in the church.

At the beginning of the century, the humanistic preference for the evidence of antiquity revived the doubts of the early church about the New Testament antilegomena and the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament. The reformers agreed that the evidence of history was opposed to granting full authority to the Old Testament apocryphal books, but they continued to include them in their Bible editions and to regard them highly. Some reformers followed Luther in seeking to determine the apostolicity and consequent canonicity of historically dubious New Testament books by comparing their evangelical content with that of the unquestioned apostolic writings. In denying full authority to certain books within the received canon, humanists and reformers not only challenged the church's understanding of tradition, but questioned her traditional right to determine canonicity solely on the basis of her own authority.

Although some early Roman Catholics practiced canonical criticism, a majority opposed it as an heretical affront to ecclesiastical authority, maintaining that the early doubts about certain books had been overcome with the progress of time. After considerable discussion, the Council of Trent officially defined the extent of inspired Scripture and attached an anathema on all dissenters. Although the Tridentine decree was not intended to eliminate intracanonical distinctions of authority, particularly in the Old Testament, such distinctions and other forms of criticism were no longer evident in post-Tridentine Catholicism. Emphasizing the divine inspiration of Scripture and linking it closely with Christian certainty, later Reformed theologians tended to place all New Testament writings on the same level, while their Lutheran contemporaries, largely neglecting the dogmatic criteriology of Luther, preferred to relegate all historically questioned books to an inferior status. Both Protestant churches continued to limit the authority of the Old Testament apocrypha.

Throughout the century, there was little debate on which books were biblical, for the key question was the degree of authority enjoyed by historically contested books within the Bible. The churches also agreed that inspired canonical writings must be prophetic or apostolic in some sense, that the testimony of the church is involved in determining canonicity, and that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the recognition of Scripture as divine. The most pronounced interconfessional difference was in understanding the interrelationship of church, tradition, and dogma. On the basis of a dogmatic and incremental concept of tradition, Roman Catholics held that the church could proclaim the extent of the canon to be a dogma. Protestants, on the other hand, denied the church's authority to give dogmatic status to any belief not based on Holy Scripture, however traditional, and therefore refused to make the precise extent of the canon an article of faith.

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INTRODUCTION

This study of the sixteenth century discussion of the biblical canon has two objectives, both of them historical but of continuing importance for the contemporary church. First, it aims to present a comprehensive survey of the major sixteenth century treatments of the problem as an important chapter in the history of the canon. Sixteenth century Christians, under the impact of humanism and the reformation, were concerned to determine which books belonged in the canon of sacred writings, and therefore had a right to serve as a standard for the church's faith and life. Their conviction on the extent of the canon will predictably affect the efforts of their spiritual descendants in the twentieth century to realize the goal of a commonly accepted biblical canon. Second, this study seeks to focus attention on the criteria of canonicity employed in that discussion as an illustration of interconfessional differences and similarities in attempting to resolve the problem of authority in the church. Such factors as historical investigation, ecclesiastical tradition and authority, the experience of justification, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit were all uniquely involved and interrelated in the sixteenth century discussion of the canon. The agreements and disagreements apparent in the use of these factors in the reformation century can provide guidance for the church in the ecumenical century. In keeping with our two objectives, each chapter seeks to answer two questions: Which writings possess canonical authority for the church? Which dogmatic, historical, literary, or other factors are employed as criteria for approving, rejecting, or

reducing the authority of various writings?

In spite of the intrinsic importance of the sixteenth century discussion of the biblical canon, this topic has not yet received a comprehensive treatment. Scholarship has usually concentrated on the formation of the canon in the first five centuries, and has given more attention to the New Testament canon than to the Old. Where important sixteenth century treatments of the problem have been discussed, little attempt has been made to view such treatments within the larger interconfessional context and the development of the debate within the century. Divorced from this context and development, the criteria of canonicity employed in such key treatments as those of Luther or the Council of Trent tend to be misunderstood. Moreover, it is widely assumed that such treatments typify the sixteenth century positions of the respective churches. But whether this assumption is true or not needs to be examined on the basis of other treatments of the problem, particularly in the decades following the Council of Trent. Yet this aspect of the sixteenth century debate on the canon has received scant attention.

The twofold objective of this study as well as the inadequacies of past treatments of the problem have shaped our methodological decision to present the results of our research comprehensively, reportorially, and chronologically. Only a broad and comprehensive survey of various treatments can meet the needs of a sixteenth century history of the canon, reveal the nature and extent of interconfessional and intraconfessional agreement and disagreement on both the extent and criteria of canonicity, and overcome the deficiencies and distortions that sometimes occur when confessional positions are characterized on the basis of a limited scope of inquiry. We have followed a basically chronological, rather than

confessional or thematic, sequence of chapters in order to demonstrate as satisfactorily as possible the reactionary nature of various positions as well as the development within the period.

Our comprehensive survey of the sixteenth century debate confirms some previously held views, and challenges others. It acknowledges the important role of historical investigation for humanism, evangelical content for Luther, the guidance of the Holy Spirit for Reformed theology, and the authority of the church for Roman Catholicism. But our study opposes the view that these factors were isolated criteria of canonicity in any one confessional tradition, and defends the thesis that the key factor in the canonical criticism of all three confessional traditions was the uncertain tradition of the early church with reference to certain biblical books. Furthermore, our study challenges the popular assumption that the varying contents of current Protestant and Roman Catholic Bibles can be traced to the sixteenth century debate on the canon, for sixteenth century editions of the Bible had virtually the same contents, in spite of their different arrangement of books. Our presentation indicates that the sixteenth century debate concerned itself primarily with the degree of authority given to questioned books within the Bible, rather than with the exclusion or retention of these books. We further suggest that in principle this question was left unsettled by all three churches, in spite of rather uniform practices and views within each tradition during the latter phases of the discussion.

Our study concentrates on the Western continental theology of the sixteenth century, and within that area, on the most significant and representative treatments of the problem. Less significant discussions of

the issue, as well as the positions of various individuals and groups associated with the "left wing" of the reformation, have either been omitted or given only a brief examination. We have devoted primary attention to sixteenth century statements dealing directly with the canonicity of one or more writings, although the evidence of major Bible editions has also been taken into account. Considerations of time and space have also made it necessary to limit our discussion of larger and related topics (such as the authority of Scripture or the relationship of Scripture and tradition) to the evidence furnished by the data on the canon. The objectives of this study, as well as the need to limit it to a reasonable length, have also led us to devote more attention to the exposition of sixteenth century sources than to an extended discussion of their contemporary interpretations and applications.

Our presentation of the sixteenth century material is preceded by a general survey of the discussion of the canon in the first fifteen centuries. The purpose of this survey is to aid in evaluating the continuity or discontinuity of sixteenth century positions with the received tradition, as well as to provide information on the positions of the fathers frequently cited in the later discussion. The second chapter sets forth the humanistic treatment of the canon in the early part of the century as represented by Erasmus, Karlstadt, and Cajetan. The significance of the humanistic position is seen to be its emphasis on historical investigation as well as its preference for earlier rather than later tradition. The positions of Luther and other early reformers are presented in chapter three. Luther's emphasis on the evangelical content of disputed books is there interpreted as an attempt to resolve the doubts of history, rather than as an independent criterion of canonicity. The fourth

chapter documents the early Roman Catholic response to the humanistic and reformation critiques of the canon and examines the discussion and decree on the canon at the Council of Trent. This chapter indicates that the Roman Catholic opposition to canonical criticism was directed as much at fellow Roman Catholics as at Protestants, and suggests that the Tridentine fathers did not intend their decree to eliminate distinctions of authority within the canon. The fifth chapter, which examines representative post-Tridentine Roman Catholic and Protestant treatments of the canon, reveals both the stabilization of Reformed and Roman Catholic positions and the continuing, but changed, criticism of Lutheran theologians. The final chapter discusses the major areas of confessional agreement and disagreement evidenced by the investigation, and summarizes the areas in which this study modifies existing views.

In the interest of greater readability, all citations appearing in the text have been given in English. Unless otherwise noted, the translations are my own. In statements of particular significance, the original text is also cited, and appears either in the footnotes or bracketed in the text. For those who may wish to pursue aspects of this discussion in greater depth, the footnotes indicate the library location of sources not generally available and refer the reader to useful treatments of certain problems.¹ It is hoped that this study will contribute to the informed ecumenical discussion of issues that continue to divide Christians from each other. If in some small way it accomplishes that, its purpose will have been well-served.

¹Unless otherwise noted, the sixteenth century sources used in this investigation are available in the libraries of Yale University.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE CANON IN TRADITION

Sixteenth century theology, whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed, was consciously occupied with the past tradition of the church. Whether attempting to continue or correct elements in that tradition, sixteenth century Christians found themselves indebted to the past and in need of establishing continuity with the past. Few, if any, sixteenth century positions are set forth as novel by their propounders, for novelty was regarded as the very antithesis of catholicity and neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant wished to forfeit the latter for the sake of the former. Sixteenth century treatments of the biblical canon were not exceptions to this general rule. To be sure, many aspects of these treatments were fresh and original. But no treatment failed to utilize the tradition of the church, in some form or another, in the course of the argument. This appeal to tradition, whether explicit or implicit, general or particular, was generally limited to theories or practices of the Western Church from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries. Only rarely were witnesses from the earliest church cited.

The following paragraphs sketch the major accents of the church's tradition on the biblical canon, with particular emphasis on the later Western tradition. Their purpose is to provide a brief historical background for the sixteenth century discussion and at the same time furnish the reader with a synopsis of some of the major statements cited in that discussion. They indicate why some books were doubted in the early church, show the gradual achievement of certainty with regard to the New

Testament and the continuing doubts about certain Old Testament books, point to the occasional conflict between scholarly theory and ecclesiastical practice, and reveal that the precise limits of the canon were still open at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹

¹Our discussion does not claim to be a comprehensive study of this tradition, nor does it propose to evaluate the soundness of the views expressed by its various spokesmen.

For summary discussions of the history of the canon in the early church, various encyclopedia articles are helpful. For the Old Testament canon, see also Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, translated by Peter Ackroyd (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 560-571. On the New Testament canon, see Paul Feine, Johannes Behm, and Werner Georg Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, translated by A. J. Mattil (14th revised edition; New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 34-58. Both Eissfeldt and Feine-Behm-Kümmel contain excellent bibliographies.

The following standard works on the early history of the New Testament canon are still useful: Theodor von Zahn, Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, I. Die Entstehung (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1907); Adolf von Harnack, Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments und die wichtigsten Folgen der neuen Schöpfung (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1914); Carl August Credner, Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1860); Edward Reuss, History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures, translated from the second French edition by David Hunter (Edinburgh: R. W. Hunter, 1891); and Brooke Foss Westcott, A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament (Seventh edition; London: Macmillan and Co., 1896). A recent study is Robert M. Grant, The Formation of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

For a more extensive treatment of the Old Testament canon in Judaism and early Christianity, see Albert C. Sundberg, The Old Testament of the Early Church, Harvard Theological Studies XX (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

The history of the canon in the Middle Ages has received less than adequate treatment. Brief accounts of the New Testament canon in that period are given by Reuss, pp. 232-270; Westcott, pp. 464-474; and Leipoldt, II, pp. 3-13. Credner's account, pp. 274-397, cites many valuable sources. The most extensive discussion of this period dealing with both Testaments is the heavily biased treatment of John Cosin, A Scholastical History of the Canon of the Holy Scripture (London: R. Norton, 1657), in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God John Cosin, III (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1849). Another useful source of information is Humfredus Hody, "De Librorum Biblicorum Numero ac Ordine," De Bibliorum Textibus Originalibus, Versionibus Graecis, et Latina Vulgata (Oxonii: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1705), pp. 644-664.

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The Canon in Early Christianity

The Christian church has possessed "Holy Scriptures" from its very beginning, for the early church, like Jesus and the apostles, continued to regard the sacred writings of the Jews as the Word of God. As the Bible of the earliest church, the "Old Testament"² was frequently used in worship services and early Christian literature as the divinely authoritative repository of God's revelation.³ But neither Jesus nor the New Testament writers nor the earliest witnesses of the church enumerated the precise extent of these Holy Scriptures. Neither Jew nor early Christian questioned the canonical status of the chief parts of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch and the Prophets. It is by no means certain, however, that the precise limits of the canon had been drawn at the time of Jesus and the apostles.⁴ The first recorded official Jewish closing of the Old Testament canon took place in Palestine near the end of the first century after Christ,⁵ therefore many years after the Christian church had

²It is, of course, anachronistic to speak of an "Old Testament" at that time. Melito of Sardis (died c. 180) was probably the first to speak of "books of the Old Testament"; see the fragment of his Excerpts preserved by Eusebius, The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, translated with an introduction by G. A. Williamson (New York: New York University Press, 1966), IV, 26, p. 189.

³Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien der Sammlung und Ausscheidung bei der Bildung des Kanons," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 61, Jahrgang (1964), 404.

⁴Werner Georg Kümmel, "Notwendigkeit und Grenze des Neutestamentlichen Kanons," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 47. Jahrgang (1950), 280.

⁵Eissfeldt, p. 568. See also Nikolaus Appel, Kanon und Kirche: Die Kanonkrise im heutigen Protestantismus als kontroverstheologisches Problem (Paderborn: Bonifacius Druckerei, 1964), p. 348.

dispersed to various parts of the world.⁶ Moreover, several New Testament authors cite the Old Testament from the Septuagint, and this continued to be the practice of the church for many years.⁷ The Septuagint differed from the Hebrew writings not only in textual details, but in the books it contained. In addition to the books included in the Hebrew canon, the Septuagint numbered also the following: Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon, I and II Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, and additions to Daniel and Esther. These books and other late Jewish writings are often cited in early Christian literature without any indication that they occupy an inferior canonical status.⁸

It seems likely, moreover, that each province of the church formed its own unofficial canon of the Old Testament,⁹ a factor that has caused difficulty for the later church's attempts to determine the precise extent of the early Christian canon of the Old Testament. How great this uncertainty was in the second century is evidenced by Melito of Sardis, who traveled to the East, probably to Palestine, about 170 A.D. in order to determine the extent of the canon more precisely. What he found was

⁶The importance of this fact for our evaluation of the sixteenth century discussion is treated in our final chapter.

⁷Kümmel, p. 280. See also Alexander Souter, The Text and Canon of the New Testament, revised by C. S. C. Williams (Second edition; London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 138.

⁸Alfred Jepsen, "Kanon und Text des Alten Testaments," Theologische Literaturzeitung, 74. Jahrgang (1949), 67-70. Jepsen states, p. 70: "Es ist erstaunlich, aber bei der Scheidung der altchristlichen Kirche vom Judentum ihrer Zeit auch verständlich, wie wenig sich die Kirche bei der Kanonisierung des AT an die jüdisch-pharisäische Form des Kanons hielt. Es gibt wohl keine altchristliche Kanonliste, die genau den Umfang des jüdischen Kanons hatte; auch Cyrill usw. haben Baruch und den Brief Jeremias eingefügt."

⁹Ibid., pp. 68-69.

the Hebrew canon, but without the book of Esther.¹⁰ Later lists from Asia Minor indicate that Melito's list was widely accepted in that area.¹¹ But the probable canon of various other provinces differs from Melito's in some details. The Egyptian canon includes several of the additional books, but omits Esther and the books of the Maccabees. Palestine apparently had various practices: omitting Esther and including the additional books, including Esther and omitting these books, or including both Esther and the additional books. In various Palestinian witnesses, however, a distinction is made between the books of the Hebrew canon and the additional books. Still another practice obtained in Syria, where no evidence of this distinction remains. The Syrian practice eventually found wide favor in Africa and Rome.¹² The uncertainty and variety found in the early church with regard to the precise extent of the Old Testament is reflected in Origen and many of the later fathers.¹³

While the Old Testament was clearly the Bible of the earliest church,

¹⁰ Melito's list is quoted by Eusebius, IV, 27, pp. 188-189.

¹¹ Jepsen, p. 68.

¹² Ibid., p. 69.

¹³ Origen's list of the canonical writings of the Old Testament cited by Eusebius (VI, 25, pp. 264-265) explicitly excludes the books of the Maccabees as doubtful and fails to include any books not in the Hebrew canon. Eusebius also suggests that Origen has doubts about II Peter, II and III John, and Hebrews (VI, 25, pp. 265-266). Reuss, pp. 129-140, argues that Origen made distinctions of rank among the New Testament writings. On the other hand, Jean Ruwet insists that the list cited by Eusebius does not represent "la série des écrits tenus pour sacrés dans l'Eglise d'Alexandrie," although he acknowledges that Origen distinguished between "les livres tenus par tous comme canoniques et les autres que certains rejettent." In "Le Canon Alexandrin des Écritures: Saint Athanase," Biblica, III (1952), 5 and 8. See also Jean Ruwet, "Les 'Antilegomena' dans les oeuvres d'Origène," Biblica, XXIII (1942), 18 ff., and XXIV (1943), 21 ff.

it was not its sole authority. Side by side with the Old Testament, the living "paradosis" or tradition stemming from Jesus and his apostles possessed divine authority.¹⁴ At first this authoritative paradosis was oral, but as apostolic writings came into existence, they too were regarded as part of the apostolic tradition.¹⁵ Very early, collections of the words of Jesus, called Logia, which were later incorporated in the Gospels, and collections of the apostolic writings, chiefly Pauline, came into existence.¹⁶ Both collections were regarded as authoritative, for in both of them Jesus, the Son of God, spoke either with His own mouth or through the words of His disciples.¹⁷ In the last half of the second

¹⁴Kümmel, pp. 281 ff., places the authority of Jesus and the apostles above that of the Old Testament. Flesseman-van Leer, p. 405, on the other hand, argues for the "Identität und nicht Subordination" of the two authorities.

¹⁵See II Thessalonians 2:15, where Paul includes both written and oral materials among the traditions. The concept of tradition is frequently found in the Pauline corpus; cf. I Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:1-3; I Thess. 2:13; 4:1; I Thess. 2:15; 3:6; Romans 6:17; Gal. 1:9, 12; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6-8. See also Luke 1:1-3; Acts 16:4; II Peter 2:21; and Jude 3. The concept of tradition in the early church is given outstanding treatment in the following: Josef R. Geiselman, Die lebendige Ueberlieferung als Norm des Christlichen Glaubens (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1959); Josef R. Geiselman, Die heilige Schrift und die Tradition (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1962); Josef R. Geiselman, The Meaning of Tradition, translated by W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); Oscar Cullmann, "The Tradition: The Exegetical, Historical, and Theological Problem," translated by A. J. B. Higgins, in The Early Church, edited by A. J. B. Higgins (Abridged edition; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 55-99; Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954), and R. P. C. Hanson, Tradition in the Early Church, The Library of History and Doctrine (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962).

¹⁶Kümmel, pp. 282-285. On the earliest collection of Pauline epistles, see Appel, pp. 77-80, and Walter Schmithals, "Zur Abfassung und ältesten Sammlung der paulinischen Hauptbriefe," Zeitschrift der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft, LI (1960), 225-245.

¹⁷Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien," p. 406.

century further impetus toward collecting these writings and distinguishing them from every other kind of literature was given through the church's confrontation with Marcionitism, Montanism, and various pseudepigraphal writings.¹⁸ By the end of the second century, not only our four present Gospels, but also thirteen Pauline epistles, the first epistles of Peter and John, and the Acts of the Apostles enjoyed full acceptance as Holy Scripture in both East and West.¹⁹ Several churches also recognized one or more of the seven remaining books of our New Testament as Scripture, but their attestation is not unanimous. Moreover, several other writings enjoyed a near canonical status in some churches.²⁰ The canon of the New Testament was thus analogous to that of the Old Testament during the first centuries of the church's existence: the majority of books in each Testament were unanimously received as Scripture, but uncertainty and variety existed with regard to the precise limits of each Testament.²¹

¹⁸ Adolf von Harnack and others have called attention to the role played by anti-Marcionitism in the formation of the Christian canon. That Marcionitism, with its rejection of the Old Testament, removal of Jewish elements from the New Testament, and claim to possess an esoteric tradition, influenced the formation of the canon is no doubt true, but this influence simply accelerated a tendency already in progress; see Kümmel, pp. 283 and 286 ff. For a brief review of the Marcionite and Montanist influence on the canon, see Appel, pp. 80-83. Kenneth L. Carroll, "The Earliest New Testament," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXXVIII (1956), 45-57, defends the thesis that pseudepigrapha exerted a greater influence of the formation of the New Testament canon in the last quarter of the second century than either Marcionitism or Montanism.

¹⁹ Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien," p. 410, and Kümmel, p. 287.

²⁰ For example, the Shepherd of Hermas, Acts of Paul, Didache, Barnabas, or the Apocalypse of Peter. For a convenient listing of books accepted and rejected by the early fathers, see Appel, pp. 68-75.

²¹ The fluid state of affairs is well illustrated in the earliest canonical list known to us, the Muratorian Fragment, which dates from the end of the second century. A critical text of this document is given by Westcott, pp. 530-547.

It is with the limits of the canon of both Testaments that the canonical discussions of the next centuries deal. The canonicity of the unanimously accepted books was never thereafter questioned by the church, for she was convinced of their divine authority. The Old Testament was Christian Scripture, not only because it was accepted by Israel, Jesus, and the apostles as the Word of God, but also because it was understood as testifying to Christ and was therefore in harmony with her own apostolic paradosis.²² Her New Testament too was the Word of God, for it enshrined not only the words and acts of Jesus, the Son of God, but the message of his chosen apostles. Its books were also "Holy Scripture," for they were apostolic, inspired, and enjoyed the continuous and widespread attestation of the church -- the chief hallmarks of canonicity.²³ Yet when the church of the second century and thereafter found the need to define the limits of the canon with some precision, it was no longer able to determine how adequately certain books met these conditions.

²²Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien," p. 412, states: "Von Anfang an hatte die Kirche nachdrücklich behauptet, das Alte Testament müsse in christlicher Art verstanden werden, nur von der Offenbarung her würde es verständlich." Jepsen particularly emphasizes the Christian understanding of the Old Testament in the early church. He states, p. 73, "So hat die Urgemeinde die Schrift von ihrer Christuserfahrung her gelesen; . . . Weil in Christus die Schrift sich erfüllte, weil sie auf Christum trieb, wurde sie für die Gemeinde Christi das Alte Testament."

²³The criterion of apostolicity was especially dominant in the West. Kümmel, pp. 288-289, states: "Als kanonisch werden nur Schriften anerkannt, die von einem Apostel stammen bzw. unter dessen Autorität geschrieben sind, und die für die ganze *catholica ecclesia* bestimmt sind." Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien," argues that the criterion of inspiration was more important for the Eastern church than apostolicity. For Origen, she contends, p. 415, inspiration "ist das grundlegende Merkmal aller kanonischen Schriften, und durch eine besondere Gabe des Heiligen Geistes sind die Kirchern imstande, zwischen inspirierten und nichtinspirierten Büchern zu unterscheiden." In both East and West, the "instimmige Meinung der Kirchen" is also decisive. For a good discussion of criteriology in the early church, see Hanson, pp. 187-236.

The earliest canonical lists accordingly reflect the sometimes different judgments of various churches on these books. When the later church, with its increased confidence in the authority and reliability of its own tradition and ecclesiastical pronouncements, attempted to delineate a biblical canon for larger segments of the church, it could do little more than render a statistical judgment reflecting the dominant practice of the various churches. While its judgment gained an ever increasing acceptance, doubts about the canonicity of several writings continued to persist for centuries.

The Canon in the Eastern Tradition

In his monumental History of the Church, completed before 325 A.D., Eusebius of Caesarea attempts to distinguish "those writings which according to the tradition of the Church are true, genuine, and recognized, from those in a different category, not canonical but disputed, yet familiar to most churchmen."²⁴ In the absence of any official canonical list, Eusebius adopts a statistical methodology, somewhat reminiscent of Origen.²⁵ Those books accepted by all consulted churches and authors, Eusebius classifies as "recognized books [ὁμολογούμενα]"; this category includes the four Gospels, Acts, Paul's epistles, I John, I Peter, and "if it be thought proper," the Revelation. A second category of books "that are disputed [ἀντιλεγόμενα], yet familiar to most," includes

²⁴Eusebius, III, 25, p. 135.

²⁵Origen spoke of books that were known in the church, but whose divine character was disputed, such as the Shepherd of Hermas. Such books were to be used, but had no authority. See Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien," p. 414, n. 36.

James, Jude, II Peter, and II and III John. Broadly speaking, this class includes also "spurious books [$\nu\acute{o}\theta\alpha$]," such as the Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, the Revelation of Peter, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache, the Gospel of the Hebrews, and the Revelation of St. John, "if this seems the right place for it: as I said before, some reject it, others include it among the Recognized Books." All books in this class must be carefully distinguished from "writings published by heretics under the name of the Apostles" such as the Gospels of Peter, Thomas, and Matthias. Not only have such writings been nowhere accepted, but their contents are irreconcilable with true orthodoxy and must be rejected as "impious [$\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\pi\iota\alpha$] and beyond the pale."²⁶

Noteworthy in the above list is Eusebius' inability to come to a firm conclusion with regard to the book of Revelation. His attitude toward Hebrews is also uncertain. In the above list, he has apparently included it among the homologoumena as a Pauline epistle, but at other times he appears to regard it as one of the antilegomena because of the doubts of the Latin church.²⁷ II Peter is "uncanonical" because it is not "authentic and accepted by the early fathers."²⁸ The authenticity of James and Jude is doubted "since few early writers" refer to them.²⁹ Interestingly,

²⁶ Eusebius, III, 25, pp. 134-135. For a critical edition of the original text, see Eusebius, *Kirchengeschichte*, herausgegeben von Eduard Schwartz (Fünfte Auflage; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1955), pp. 104-105.

²⁷ Eusebius, *History*, III, 3, p. 108; III, 38, p. 149; VI, 20, p. 261; and VI, 25, p. 266.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 3, p. 108.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 23, p. 103.

Eusebius has high praise for the first epistle of Clement, and testifies that this letter was read in the worship services of his own church.³⁰

Eusebius' judgment on the Old Testament is less explicit. He notes, for example, that Origen's list of the Old Testament includes "the twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon."³¹ Melito's list of the Hebrew canon (minus Esther) is introduced as a "list of the recognized books [τῶν ὁμολογουμένων] of the Old Testament."³² Eusebius notes that Clement of Alexander made use of "evidence drawn from the Disputed Writings" and specifically names the books of Wisdom and Sirach.³³ Although such evidence is scanty, it suggests that Eusebius regarded the additional books of the Septuagint as antilegomena.³⁴

Eusebius' treatment of Josephus gives weight to that suggestion. He praises Josephus' "general truthfulness," then describes his reply to Apion the grammarian as a "worth-while book." In that book, Eusebius tells us, Josephus "gives the number of the canonical scriptures forming the Old Testament, as it is called, showing which of them are undisputed among the Hebrews as being backed by ancient tradition."³⁵ Eusebius then cites the following paragraph from Josephus' Against Apion [I, 8] as being of obvious value:

We do not have vast numbers of books, discordant and conflicting, but only twenty-two, containing the record of all time and with

³⁰Ibid., III, 16, pp. 124-125; III, 38, pp. 148-149; and IV, 23, p. 185.

³¹Ibid., VI, 25, pp. 264-265.

³²Ibid., IV, 26, pp. 188-189.

³³Ibid., VI, 13, p. 253.

³⁴See also the evidence cited by Cosin, pp. 46-47.

³⁵Eusebius, History, III, 9, p. 121.

reason believed to be divine. Of these five are books of Moses, containing the Laws and the tradition of the origin of mankind up to his death. This period covers nearly 3,000 years. From Moses' death to that of Artaxerxes, who followed Xerxes as King of Persia, the prophets after Moses recorded the events of their own time in thirteen books. The remaining four contain hymns to God and precepts for human conduct. From Artaxerxes to the present day the whole story has been written down, but does not command the same belief as the earlier narrative because there was not an unbroken succession of prophets. It is evident from our actions what is our attitude to our own scriptures; for though so many centuries have gone by, no one has presumed to add, take away, or alter anything in them, but it is innate in every Jew from the day of his birth to regard them as the ordinances of God, to abide in them, and if need be to die for them gladly.³⁶

As cited by Eusebius, this citation from the first century Jewish historian undoubtedly exerted considerable influence on the church's attitude toward the Old Testament canon.

Eusebius is a clear witness to the continuing uncertainty of the church with regard to certain biblical writings. His criteriology is especially significant. Although orthodox content and apostolic origin were important factors, one criterion is clearly dominant: the reception or rejection of a writing by the churches, as evidenced especially by the early fathers.³⁷ Many others were to follow his example, sometimes with different results.

About the middle of the fourth century, Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, dealt with the biblical canon in his fourth catechetical lecture. Cyril urges his catechumens not to read any of the "uncertain books" [τῶν ἀποκρύφων]. He asks, "Why shouldest thou, who knowest not those which are acknowledged by all [τὰ ὁμολογούμενα], take needless trouble

³⁶Ibid., III, 10, pp. 121-122.

³⁷Flesseman-van Leer, "Prinzipien," p. 417, n. 42, emphasizes that Eusebius was particularly influenced by the testimony of the ancient church, whereas Origen had placed greater weight on current usage.

about those which are questioned [τὰ ἀμφιβαλλόμενα]?" The candidate should rather learn from the church which books are to be read, namely, those handed down by the apostles and ancient bishops as rulers of the church. After relaying the tradition about the inspiration of the Septuagint, Cyril urges his hearers to read the twenty-two books it contains. His list is that of the Hebrew canon, with no mention being made of the additional books. However, the book of Jeremiah is described as "the book of Jeremias, which with Baruch, the Lamentations, and the Epistle makes one book." Unwittingly, Cyril has accepted the Septuagint additions to Jeremiah, and may have done the same with Daniel.³⁸

Cyril's New Testament consisted of the four Gospels, Acts, seven catholic epistles, and fourteen epistles of Paul. Cyril exhorts: "But all the rest, let them be put aside into the second rank; and what is not read in the churches, that read not by thyself." Noteworthy by its absence from the approved list is the book of Revelation. Like Eusebius, Cyril's criterion was the usage of the church, which he assumed was faithful to the apostolic tradition. Unlike Eusebius, Cyril made no mention of antilegomena in the New Testament.³⁹

In 363 A.D., a provincial council met in Laodicea to draw up rules regarding church government and discipline. The fifty-ninth canon of this council directs that neither privately written hymns nor non-canonical

³⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, "Lecture IV. On the Ten Points of Faith," A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1839), II, 48-50. Original text in J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1857-1903), XXXIII, 498 ff. This edition is hereafter cited as MPG. See also Reuss, p. 170, n. 1.

³⁹ Cyril, pp. 50-51.

books [ἀκανόνιστα βιβλία] should be read in the church, "but only the canonical books of the Old and New Covenant." The prohibition of non-canonical writings echoes the sentiment of Cyril, but the terms "canonical" and "non-canonical" have replaced "homologoumena" and "antilegomena." Some manuscripts add a sixtieth canon with a list of approved books identical to the list given by Cyril.⁴⁰

In the church of Alexandria, the great bishop and churchman Athanasius attempted to establish a normative canon in his thirty-ninth Easter letter of 367 A.D. After warning against the dangers of heretical "apocryphal" writings, the bishop sets forth the "books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as divine." He purports to do this on the basis of the testimony which those "who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the fathers."⁴¹ His Old Testament, which contains twenty-two books corresponding to "the number of letters among the Hebrews," is the same as that of Cyril and the Council of Laodicea, including the additions to Jeremiah, but with one important exception: the book of Esther is omitted.⁴² His New Testament list is identical to theirs, except for an important addition: the Revelation of John is included as a fully canonical book. His New

⁴⁰ Joannes Dominicus Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio (Florentiae: Expensis Antonii Zatta Veneti, 1759), II, 573. This edition is hereafter cited as Mansi. See also Credner, pp. 217 ff.

⁴¹ Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, editors, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1892), IV, 551-552. This edition is hereafter cited as Nicene Fathers. Cf. also MPG, XXVI, 26, 1435-1438.

⁴² Jean Ruwet suggests Jewish influence as the chief reason for the exclusion of Esther; in "Le Canon Alexandrin des Écritures," Biblica, XXXIII (1952), 15-20.

Testament list is the first to correspond exactly with our present New Testament. The bishop exhorts: "In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these."⁴³

While Cyril and the Council of Laodicea had strenuously forbidden the reading of non-canonical writings, Athanasius acknowledges "that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness." Included in the latter category are the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas. These books which may be read are not "included in the Canon," but neither are they "apocryphal writings." Thus the bishop's list of approved books is wider than his canon.⁴⁴

The Athanasian canon did not at once become the law of the church. His illustrious contemporary, Gregory Nazianzen, consciously omits Revelation from his otherwise Athanasian list of the New Testament.⁴⁵ Another contemporary, Amphilocius of Iconium, reveals a still greater divergence. He is more cautious about the book of Esther, which he includes with these words, "Some add Esther to these books." He acknowledges that several reject the Epistle to the Hebrews; that some receive seven catholic epistles, while others have only three; and that some

⁴³Nicene Fathers, IV, 552.

⁴⁴Ibid. Ruwet, p. 12, claims that Athanasius sometimes used the non-canonical, but approved, books as fully authoritative, however.

⁴⁵"Carmina," I, 1, MPG, XXXVII, 472-474.

accept the book of Revelation, while many more reject it. He concludes his list with the remarkable words, "This is perhaps the most exact list of the inspired Scriptures."⁴⁶ Amphilochius was in fact much closer to Eusebius than to Athanasius.

The lists of Epiphanius, bishop of Constantia on the isle of Cyprus toward the end of the fourth century, closely resemble the Athanasian canon, except for the inclusion of Esther. He mentions the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach as books which are doubtful or apocryphal, but nevertheless useful and fruitful. Unlike Amphilochius and others, he expressed no doubts with regard to any of the New Testament antilegomena.⁴⁷ The probable canon of John Chrysostom, patriarch of Constantinople at the end of the fourth century, is much closer to that of Amphilochius in recognizing only three catholic epistles in the New Testament.⁴⁸ Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia at the beginning of the fifth century, not only questioned several of the New Testament antilegomena, but also expressed severe criticisms of the traditional Old Testament canon. He wished to exclude Job, the Song of Solomon, and Esther, and allow only a lower degree of authority to Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. On the other hand, he had high praise for Baruch and Sirach.⁴⁹

However fluid and uncertain the canon of the Eastern church was at the beginning of the fifth century, the general practice was to accept

⁴⁶"Carmina," II, 2, MPG, XXXVII, 1593-1598.

⁴⁷"Haeresis," VIII and XLVIII, cited by Westcott, pp. 559-561.

⁴⁸"Synopsis veteris et novi testamenti," MPG, LVI, 313-386. See also Credner, pp. 228-229.

⁴⁹Jepsen, p. 69, and Credner, p. 229.

only those Old Testament books contained in the Hebrew canon, although the book of Jeremiah and possibly Daniel contained the additions of the Septuagint. Within the Hebrew canon, some continued the practice begun in the second century by Melito of Sardis in rejecting the book of Esther.

Although our present New Testament was known and accepted by many, doubts about some of the antilegomena, especially Revelation, continued to persist. The earlier practice of reading only canonical books was being replaced by a more positive attitude toward certain non-canonical but useful books such as Sirach and Wisdom. Where the criteria of selection or rejection are in evidence, it appears that the Eastern church was guided chiefly by its desire to accept only those books known from the witness of the early fathers to be inspired. Where that witness was uncertain, the churches continued to be guided by the traditional practices of their areas.⁵⁰

The situation just described changed little over the next centuries, although the earlier doubts about Esther and Revelation tended to recede

⁵⁰ Because of the difficulties involved in assigning their various contents to the proper place and time, we have not included the so-called Apostolic Constitutions in our survey. Many scholars suggest a Syrian origin in the last quarter of the fourth century, although some of its contents are earlier and many manuscripts have been edited by a later hand. The Constitutions make no mention of any of the catholic epistles or the Apocalypse. Their forty-seventh chapter contains the eighty-five so-called Apostolic Canons. The eighty-fifth canon includes three books of Maccabees as canonical and recommends Sirach for the instruction of the youth. The New Testament omits the Apocalypse, but accepts the catholic epistles, the Apostolic Constitutions (which exclude the catholic epistles!), and two epistles of Clement as canonical. See Credner, pp. 234-237, and MPG, I, 555-1156.

We have not discussed the many early Bible manuscripts, which generally contain the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament and some of the Apostolic Fathers in the New Testament. Because we know that many writings were read in the early church without being considered fully canonical, the manuscript evidence is inconclusive for determining the precise extent of the canon.

with time. In the middle of the sixth century, Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Egyptian monk who had traveled widely, drafted a catalog of the Scriptures which failed to mention either the catholic epistles or the Apocalypse.⁵¹ Leontius, a late sixth century author, omits Esther as well as the six additional books of the Septuagint, but includes all books in the Athanasian New Testament without distinction.⁵² Anastasius Sinaitica, late sixth-century patriarch of Antioch, divided the biblical books into three classes. The first class, containing the sixty genuinely biblical books, omits Esther and the Apocalypse. The second class, designated simply as "those which are outside the sixty," includes Wisdom, Sirach, four books of the Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, and Esther. The third class, numbering twenty-five books, is entitled "Apocryphal books." Significantly, the book of Revelation appears nowhere in this list of ninety-four books.⁵³

A striking illustration of the uncertainty and variety of the Eastern church came in 691-692 A.D. at the Council of Trullum in Constantinople. In its second canon, this council sanctioned as authoritative for the church the decrees of the councils of Laodicea and Carthage, the testimony of the eighty-five Apostolic canons, and such authorities as Athanasius, Amphilochius, and Gregory Nazianzen. Although purporting to be a binding decision on the church, the decree was manifestly incapable of precise application, for its authorities were not in agreement with

⁵¹"Christiana Topographica," III, MPG, LXXXVIII, 49-52. See also Credner, pp. 237-238.

⁵²"De sectis," I and II, MPG, LXXXVI, part I, 1199-1211. See also Reuss, p. 242.

⁵³Credner, pp. 240-241, and Hody, p. 649, col. 44.

each other.⁵⁴

In spite of the prescribed ambiguity of this council, Eastern churchmen occasionally attempted a more carefully prescribed list of books. In the middle of the eighth century, the great theologian John of Damascus included a canonical list in his De Orthodoxa Fide. His twenty-two book Old Testament includes the book of Esther. The books of Wisdom and Sirach are acknowledged as beautiful and honest books, "but they are not numbered among the prophetic books nor were they placed into the ark." His New Testament accepts all of the catholic epistles as well as the book of Revelation, but also contains the Apostolic Canons ascribed to Clement.⁵⁵ In 787 A.D., the second council of Nicea reaffirmed the canons of Constantinople, and explicitly rejected the apocryphal epistle to the Laodiceans from the canonical books of the New Testament.⁵⁶

At the beginning of the ninth century, the patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople published a stichometric catalogue of holy books. The twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon are accepted, but Baruch is named while Esther is omitted. The New Testament contains twenty-six books, omitting the Apocalypse. As antilegomena, Nicephorus lists three Maccabean books, Wisdom, Sirach, the Psalms and Canticles of Solomon, Judith, Susannah, Tobit, Esther, the Apocalypses of John and Peter, Barnabas, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews. A third class, designated as apocrypha, contains such books as Enoch, the Assumption of

⁵⁴Mansi, XI, 939-942.

⁵⁵"De orthodoxa fide," IV, 17, MPG, XCIV, 1175-1180.

⁵⁶Mansi, XIII, 294. See also Credner, p. 248.

Moses, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas.⁵⁷

During the next four centuries, extant writings reveal little about the status of the canon. Such extracts as are available suggest, however, that the fathers of these centuries generally appealed to the prior decisions of Laodicea, Constantinople, or certain fathers.⁵⁸ The fourteenth century author, Nicephorus Callistus, may well illustrate the state of the canon in the Eastern church at the end of the Middle Ages. Like most of his predecessors, Callistus acknowledged the twenty-two book Hebrew canon in the Old Testament, but he adds these words: "These are the genuine historical books of the Scripture, to which several add Esther, Judith and Tobit." His New Testament is identical to ours. He has read Eusebius and knows the earlier doubts about the antilegomena of the New Testament, but believes those doubts have been fully dispelled and affirms that the churches are unanimous on this point.⁵⁹

In principle as well as practice, the canon of the Eastern church remained relatively open, especially with regard to the books of Esther and Revelation. The Septuagint additions to the Hebrew canon were not regarded as canonical, although books such as Wisdom, Sirach, Judith, and Tobit were highly esteemed, and the Septuagint additions to Jeremiah and Daniel were sometimes included as integral parts of these books. In the New Testament, earlier doubts about the antilegomena gradually disappeared, although uncertainty about Revelation occasionally persisted. The dominant criterion of canonicity continued to be the tradition of the early

⁵⁷Credner, pp. 241-244, and Hody, p. 648, col. 42.

⁵⁸See the examples cited by Credner, pp. 250-254, and Reuss, p. 259.

⁵⁹Hody, p. 648, col. 43. See also Reuss, p. 260.

church. But the later church apparently knew that tradition chiefly from the fourth century account of Eusebius, and therefore continued to rest its case on the basis of the data he had presented.

The Canon in the Western Tradition

Like the Eastern church of the same period, the fourth century Western church found it necessary to wrestle with the precise delimitation of its canon. The theories and decisions set forth at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century exerted great influence on the Western church for several centuries, and constituted a major court of appeal for the theologians of the sixteenth century as well.

About 360 A.D., Hilary of Poitiers published a list of Old Testament canonical books in his prologue to Psalm 15. Like Origen and others, Hilary lists the Hebrew canon of twenty-two books, but includes the letter appended to Jeremiah. He notes that by adding the books of Tobit and Judith the number of books will correspond to the Roman alphabet.⁶⁰ A few years later, Philastrius, the bishop of Brescia, scorns those heretics who "accept only the prophets and apostles and not the canonical scriptures," and who prefer to read the apocryphal writings.

He continues:

On account of this, it was decreed by the apostles and their successors that nothing else ought to be read in the catholic church except the law and the prophets, the Gospels and acts of the Apostles, the thirteen epistles of Paul and seven other epistles, namely, two Petrine, three Johannine, one by Jude, and one by James, which seven

⁶⁰ J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina* (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1844-1903), IX, 241. This edition is hereafter cited as MPL. See also Westcott, pp. 584-585.

are joined to the Acts of the Apostles. The hidden or apocryphal writings, however, ought not be read by all, although they ought to be read by those more mature for the sake or morals.

Although Hebrews and Revelation are omitted in this list, the bishop elsewhere condemns the heretics who refuse to read these books in church.⁶¹

More significant was the testimony of Philastrius' contemporary and countryman, Rufinus of Aquileia. He had traveled through the East, knew the writings of Origen and other fathers, and for many years was a close friend of Jerome. In his commentary on the Apostles' Creed, Rufinus lists the twenty-two books found in the Hebrew canon, and the twenty-seven New Testament books of Athanasius. No indication is given that some of these writings have been disputed; on the contrary, Rufinus underscores the traditional apostolic authorship of the New Testament antilegomena. The writings thus enumerated, Rufinus notes, are those "which the Fathers included in the canon, and on which they desired the affirmation of our faith to be based."⁶²

Rufinus lists two other classes of books in addition to the canonical Scriptures. One class, designated as "ecclesiastical," contains Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, and the books of the Maccabees, and "in the New Testament" the Shepherd of Hermas, the Two Ways, and the Judgment of Peter. Such ecclesiastical books, Rufinus notes, the fathers desired "to be read in the churches, but that appeal should not be made

⁶¹MPL, XII, 1199 ff. See also Westcott, p. 578, and Reuss, pp. 187-191.

⁶²Rufinus of Aquileia, A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed, translated and annotated by J. N. D. Kelly, Volume XX in Ancient Christian Writers, edited by Johannes Quasten and Joseph Plumpe. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), pp. 72-73.

to them on points of faith."⁶³ Finally, Rufinus notes that a third "apocryphal" class exists, and that the fathers refused "to allow them to be read out in church." Rufinus claims to be offering "the traditional canon handed down to us by the Fathers," and that he has based his catalogue "on the records of the fathers." Although he was familiar with the Eastern tradition, his list differs from those of Cyril, Athanasius, and the Council of Laodicea. Neither Esther nor Revelation is questioned, and, in contrast to Cyril and the Council of Laodicea, he encourages the reading of certain non-canonical books. In that regard, he is closer to Athanasius; however, Athanasius suggested that such books be read by catechumens, while Rufinus makes no such limitation.⁶⁴

A similar view of the canon, and one that came to exert wide influence on the Western church throughout the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, was that of the great biblical scholar and translator, Jerome. Like his contemporary Rufinus, Jerome had traveled widely and lived several years in Palestine. Between 382 and 404 A.D. he translated the entire Bible into Latin. This version, with some modifications, became the Bible of the Middle Ages and later received the official sanction of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. His theory of the canon was expressed in many places: in the prefaces he prepared for the biblical books and which continued to be included in copies of the Vulgate, in

⁶³Rufinus, p. 73. This dictum, echoed throughout the next centuries, reads thus in the original Latin: "Quae omnia legi quidem in ecclesiis voluerunt, non tamen proferri ad auctoritatem ex his fidei confirmandum," MPL, XXI, 374.

⁶⁴Rufinus, pp. 72-74. For a discussion on Rufinus' views on the canon, see Kelly's introduction to Rufinus, pp. 20-26, and M. Stenzel, "Der Bibelkanon des Rufin von Aquileja," *Biblica*, XXIII, (1942), 43-61.

letters to friends, various treatises, and many biblical commentaries.⁶⁵

With regard to the Old Testament, Jerome's theory was that no book should be received by the church as canonical that was not found in the Hebrew canon, for the Jews who had compiled and preserved it were the best judges of its contents. Thus he not only based his translation on the Hebrew text rather than on the Greek translations, but used that text as the criterion of what was canonical in the strict sense. In his Prologus Galeatus, Jerome sets forth the Hebrew canon of twenty-two books (or twenty-four, if Ruth and Lamentations are reckoned separately) according to the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa. He then asserts, "we may be assured that what is not found in our list must be placed amongst the Apocryphal writings." Among the latter he places Wisdom, Sirach, Judith, Tobit, and the Shepherd of Hermas, remarking that they "are not in the canon." He is not certain about I Maccabees, for he has found it in Hebrew, but the second book of Maccabees is clearly Greek, as its style proves.⁶⁶

Although he uses the word "apocryphal" with reference to the books rejected from the canon, he did not regard such books as heretical nor prohibit their use by the church. In his preface to the books of Solomon, Jerome accepts only three Solomonic books as canonical, rejecting the

⁶⁵Our discussion of Jerome is limited to those writings of his which were known throughout the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. The most useful treatment of Jerome's views on the canon is Leon Sanders, Études sur Saint Jérôme (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1903), pp. 196-270. Also useful are a series of articles by Henry Howorth, "The Influence of St. Jerome on the Canon of the Western Church," Journal of Theological Studies, X (1909), 481-496; XI (1910), 321-347; and XIII (1911), 1-18.

⁶⁶Nicene Fathers, VI, 489-490; MPL, XXVIII, 593 ff.

Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach. He continues with a statement that was destined to be quoted many times in the history of the church:

As, then, the Church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two volumes for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the church.⁶⁷

He also applied his principle to the Septuagint additions to Jeremiah, Daniel, and Esther. Although he translated these sections, he carefully distinguished them from the canonical text. Baruch is "neither read nor held among the Hebrews."⁶⁸ The Greek additions to Esther are translated from the Old Latin text and noted with a special mark, for they are not found in the Hebrew text.⁶⁹ In his preface to Daniel, he states:

I say this to show you how hard it is to master the book of Daniel, which in Hebrew contains neither the history of Susanna, nor the hymn of the three youths, nor the fables of Bel and the Dragon; because, however, they are to be found everywhere, we have formed them into an appendix, prefixing to them an obelus, and thus making an end of them, so as not to seem to the uninformed to have cut off a large portion of the volume.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 494. Jerome's statement, like that of Rufinus, was repeated several times in subsequent centuries. In the original, the last part reads, "sic et haec duo volumina legat ad aedificationem plebis, non ad auctoritatem ecclesiasticorum dogmatum confirmandum," MPL, XXVIII, 1308. In view of Jerome's positive attitude toward such books, it is not surprising that he often cites them in his writings. Sanders' list of citations, pp. 216-221, reveals that he cites them much less frequently than the canonical writings, however.

In a letter to Laeta in 403 A.D., Jerome acknowledges "the truth of the doctrines" which the "apocryphal writings" contain. But he also asserts that "they are not really written by those to whom they are ascribed, that many faulty elements have been introduced into them, and that it requires infinite discretion to look for gold in the midst of dirt." In Nicene Fathers, VI, Letter CVII, p. 194. While it is possible that Jerome is here using "apocrypha" in the Rufinian sense, it is evident that dogmatic factors also played a role in his rejection of such books.

⁶⁸MPL, XXVIII, 904.

⁶⁹Ibid., cols. 1503 ff.

⁷⁰Nicene Fathers, VI, 493; MPL, XXVIII, 1359.

Jerome's unwillingness to disturb the uninformed by omitting the non-canonical sections from his translation also led him to translate some of the non-canonical books. He acknowledges, however, that his translation of Sirach is simply an improvement of an existing translation, for he would rather employ his Latin "on what is certain rather than on what is doubtful."⁷¹ His reasons for translating the books of Tobit and Judith are more complex and furnish an additional perspective for understanding his theory of the canon. In his preface to the former book he acknowledges that the Jews have excluded the book of Tobit from the catalog of divine writings and that on that account he ought not translate it. But he has translated it, he tells us, because of his friends' request and because he deems it best "to displease the judgment of the Pharisees and to obey the requests of the Bishops."⁷² In his preface to Judith, he writes:

Among the Jews, the book of Judith is placed among the apocrypha⁷³ whose authority is judged to be less suitable for settling those matters which are disputed. Because this book is written in Chaldean script, it is numbered among the historical writings. But because the synod of Nicea thought that this book is included in the number of Holy Scriptures, I have complied with your request.⁷⁴

⁷¹Nicene Fathers, VI, 494; MPL, XXIX, 427-428.

⁷²MPL, XXIX, 23 ff.

⁷³The word "apocrypha" in this statement and in a similar one in the preface to Tobit was altered in some later manuscripts to read "hagiographa." On that account, many later fathers accepted these books into the canon on Jerome's authority. The error was acknowledged already by Brito, Driedo, and Catharinus, and has been documented by early manuscript discoveries. See Hody, p. 651.

⁷⁴"Apud Hebraeos liber Iudith inter apocrypha legitur: cuius auctoritas ad roboranda illa quae in contentionem veniunt, minus idonea iudicatur. Chaldaeo tamen sermone conscriptus, inter historias computatur. Sed quia hunc librum synodus Nicaena in numero sanctarum Scripturarum legitur computasse, acquievi postulatione vestrae," MPL, XXIX, 39 ff.

Jerome translated both books because he was willing to bow to the authority of the church, whether it was the request of bishops to include Tobit, or a supposed conciliar decision with regard to Judith. In neither case, however, did Jerome admit the book to the canon in the narrow sense, for he again reminds the reader that such books have less authority for settling matters of contention. Jerome's theory and practice indicate that the limits of the Old Testament canon were not strictly defined in the church of his time. At the same time, they offer implicit evidence that many accepted a much wider canon than the one he proposed as authoritative.

In a letter written to Paulinus in 394 A.D., Jerome gives a brief description of the contents of each of the Biblical books of both Testaments. He limits his discussion to the books in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament and the Athanasian canon of the New Testament. He notes that Hebrews "is not generally counted" with the other Pauline epistles, but this is not a judgment on its canonicity.⁷⁵ Writing to Dardanus in 414 A.D., he emphasizes that the epistle was received as Pauline by the Eastern churches as well as by all the early Greek fathers, although many others held that it was written either by Barnabas or Clement. Acknowledging that "Latin custom does not receive it among the canonical scriptures," just as the Greek churches are free not to accept the Apocalypse, Jerome asserts: "Following the authority of the old writers rather than the custom of this age, we receive both of them . . . as

⁷⁵Nicene Fathers, VI, Letter LIII, 101. Reuss, p. 194, asserts that this letter was "printed as a prologue in all of the old editions of the Vulgate." The same judgment appears in Samuel Berger, Les Préfaces Jointes aux Livres de la Bible dans les Manuscrits de la Vulgate (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1902), p. 21.

canonical and ecclesiastical."⁷⁶

Jerome also knew the earlier doubts about other New Testament antilegomena, and expressed them in his De Viris Illustribus of 392 A.D. He observes that the epistle of James gained authority in the course of time, having been disputed earlier.⁷⁷ Jude was "rejected by many" because it quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch, but "by age and use" it has become canonical.⁷⁸ II Peter, although reckoned among the catholic epistles, "is considered by many not to be by him" on account of "its difference from the first in style."⁷⁹ II and III John are believed to be the work of John the presbyter, Jerome claims, but the Apostle John is the author of the Apocalypse.⁸⁰ Although Jerome regarded all the antilegomena as canonical, his writings helped keep a knowledge of the earlier doubts alive.

While Jerome's position on the New Testament canon was readily accepted by his contemporaries, the same cannot be said about his distinction between canonical and apocryphal writings in the Old Testament, nor with regard to his use of the Hebrew canon as the church's criterion for Old Testament canonicity. The chief opposition came from the African churches and the illustrious bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine. In a letter

⁷⁶MPL, XXII, Epistola CXXIX, 1103.

⁷⁷Nicene Fathers, III, 361.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 362.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 361. Elsewhere, Jerome explains the stylistic difference by suggesting that Peter used different interpreters; see Westcott, p. 461, n. 1.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 364. Jerome's emphasis on apostolic authorship or approval is evident in his suggestion that Peter approved Mark's Gospel, ibid., p. 361.

to Jerome, Augustine relates that some did not want Jerome's translation from the Hebrew to be read in the churches, "lest contrary to the authority of the Septuagint and as offering something novel, we scandalously disturb the people of Christ whose ears and hearts have been accustomed to hearing that translation which was also approved by the apostles."⁸¹ For Augustine, the real mark of canonicity was acceptance by the church, and the accepted and therefore authoritative Bible of the church was not the Hebrew Bible, but the Septuagint.⁸² The difference between Jerome and Augustine on this point is reflected throughout the subsequent tradition of the Western church.

St. Augustine's most extensive treatment of the canon is in Book Two of his De Doctrina Christiana, written in 397 A.D. to instruct the reader in the understanding and interpretation of Holy Scripture. The twenty-seven book canon of the New Testament reflects none of the earlier doubts about certain books. Even the disputed book of Hebrews is listed as one of Paul's fourteen epistles. His Old Testament contains not only the Hebrew canon, but the additional books of the Septuagint, and the latter are interspersed among the former with no indication of inferiority. The only indication of a disputed status occurs in connection with the mention of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. These books, Augustine notes,

are ascribed to Solomon from a certain resemblance of style, but the most likely opinion is that they were written by Jesus the

⁸¹MPL, XXII, Epistola CXVI, 952.

⁸²Augustine expresses himself most clearly on this point in The City of God, XVIII, 43. Here Augustine praises the work of Jerome, but clearly maintains the superiority of the Septuagint because "the same Spirit who was in the prophets when they spoke these things was also in the seventy men when they translated them." He therefore concludes, "But whatever is in the Septuagint and not in the Hebrew copies, the same Spirit chose rather

son or Sirach. Still they are to be reckoned among the prophetic books, since they have attained recognition as being authoritative.

The most noteworthy feature of the bishop's catalog of books is its failure to make the kind of distinction between the Hebrew and Septuagint canons that his contemporaries Jerome, Rufinus, and Athanasius had done.⁸³

Nevertheless, it is clear from the context that distinctions may be made. Augustine indicates that the purpose of his remarks is to help the reader distinguish from a larger group of "sacred writings" those books which may be safely studied and which will enable him to be "built up in the belief of the truth." That distinctions must also be made within the canon of approved books is the point of the statement with which Augustine introduces his canonical list: "Now the whole canon of Scripture on which we say this judgment is to be exercised, is contained in the following books." The nature of this judgment is carefully described:

Now, in regard to the canonical Scriptures, he must follow the judgment of the greater number of catholic churches; and among these, of course, a high place must be given to such as have been thought worthy to be the seat of an apostle and to receive epistles. Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures he will judge according to the following standard: to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive. Among those, again, which are not received by all, he will prefer such as have the sanction of the greater number and those of greater authority, to such as are held by the smaller number and those of less authority. If, however, he shall find that some books are held by the greater number of churches, and others by the churches of greater authority (though this is not a very likely thing to happen), I think that in such a case the authority on the two sides is to be looked upon as equal.

That Augustine intended to define the limits of the canon, rather than to

to say through the latter, thus showing that both were prophets." See Nicene Fathers, First Series, II, 386-387.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 538-539.

preclude distinctions within it, is further suggested by his statement that the authority of each Testament "is contained within the limits" of the enumerated books.⁸⁴

Augustine's method of judging the canonical books indicates that his chief criterion of canonicity was ecclesiastical acceptance. Books have authority not primarily because of their origin or contents, but because they have been received as authoritative by a great number of churches or by a number of great churches. He appeals primarily to the present practice of the churches, rather than to more ancient traditions, because he is convinced of the valid continuity between the past and the present. In his Contra Faustum, the bishop explains:

There is a distinct boundary line separating all subsequent writings from the authoritative canonical books of the Old and New Testament. The authority of these books, having been established in apostolic times, has come down to us through the successions of bishops and the extension of the church, and from a position of lofty supremacy claims the submission of every faithful and pious mind.⁸⁵

The authority of the church, the custodian of the Scriptures, is prior to the Scriptures. In every age, therefore, the authority of the church is a "constant and proximate criterion of canonicity."⁸⁶ Augustine gave eloquent witness to this principle in his well-known dictum, "I would not believe the Gospel, unless the authority of the church moved me to."⁸⁷

⁸⁴Ibid. We are not suggesting that Augustine recognized a distinct class of deuterocanonical books, although Cosin, pp. 124-142, offers some evidence to support that contention.

⁸⁵MPL, XLII, 248-249. Cited by C. J. Costello, "St. Augustine's Canon of Scripture and His Criterion of Canonicity," Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa, Section spéciale, I (1932), 134.

⁸⁶Costello, p. 137.

⁸⁷"Ego evangelio non crederem nisi me catholicae ecclesiae auctoritas commoveret," Contra Epistolam Manichaei, V, 6, MPL, XLII, 176.

In Africa, the need for a sharp distinction between the Bible and all other religious literature led the two provincial synods of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.) to draw up a list of canonical Scriptures. Not surprisingly, the list is essentially that of St. Augustine. However, the synods recognize "five books of Solomon," whereas Augustine spoke of three, and they do not ascribe the authorship of Hebrews to the Apostle Paul. More significant is the introductory sentence: "Nothing except canonical Scriptures may be read in the church under the name of divine Scriptures." Closely resembling the fifty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea, this statement suggests that its list of canonical scriptures designates those books that may be read in the churches as distinguished from those which may not; as such, it does not intend to rule out distinctions within the canon. Furthermore, the decree immediately makes an exception to its own rule when it declares, "The acts of the martyrs may also be read when their anniversary days are celebrated." Finally, the decree asks that the Roman church be consulted for confirming this canonical list, a practice reflecting Augustine's theory about the importance of the major churches in determining which books are canonical.⁸⁸

There is no evidence that the church of Rome ever replied to this request. However, the bishop of Rome soon became involved in the question of the canon. In Spain and southern Gaul, there was frequent use of apocryphal writings by the Priscillianists and other groups. In 400 A.D., a council of Toledo decreed: "If anyone should say or believe that any other writings except those which the catholic church receives are to be

⁸⁸"Ut praeter scripturas canonicas nihil in ecclesia legatur sub nomine divinarum scripturarum. . . . Liceat etiam legi passiones martyrum, cum anniversarii dies eorum celebrentur," Mansi, III, 891 and 924.

held in authority or venerated, let him be anathema."⁸⁹ But the precise list of books which the "catholic church receives" had not yet been determined. On this account, Bishop Exuperius of Toulouse asked Innocent I, bishop of Rome, for a list of such writings. In 405 A.D. he replied with a list of books identical to that of Carthage, differing only slightly in order. Hebrews is listed as one of "fourteen epistles of the Apostle Paul." The list concludes with a strong condemnation of certain pseud-epigrapha.⁹⁰

The letter of Innocent I was, however, not generally known for several years.⁹¹ In 419 A.D., another Council of Carthage took up the question of the canon, and promulgated the list of the previous council. They added the statement that the canonical books "are those which they have received from the fathers to be read in the church." But once again they request that this canon "received from the fathers" be ratified by the Roman bishop Boniface or by other bishops.⁹² The decree indicates that the church of Rome had not yet issued a formal decision on the canon. But it also suggests that at this time the accepted way to determine the biblical canon

⁸⁹"Si quis dixerit vel crediderit alias scripturas, praeter quas ecclesia catholica recipit, in auctoritate habendas esse vel venerandas, anathema sit," Mansi, III, 1004.

⁹⁰MPL, XX, 501. That this letter failed to end the problems caused by the circulation of pseudepigrapha in that area is indicated by the 447 A.D. letter from Leo I to Turribius; see MPL, LIV, 68.

⁹¹Credner, pp. 283-284, asserts that it was not generally known in Spain until after 589 A.D., and was not cited elsewhere before 556 A.D.

⁹²Mansi, IV, 430. That the African church issued three decrees on the canon within a thirty year period was no doubt due to a continued problem with apocryphal writings and the failure of the Roman church to speak authoritatively on the subject. Costello's suggestion, p. 129, that the decrees were motivated by Jerome's opposition to the deuterocanonical books seems less likely.

was through authoritative ecclesiastical pronouncement rather than independent historical research or statistical computation.⁹³

Even without an authoritative Roman decision, however, the general limits of the canon of books to be read in the church had been determined with a great deal more precision in the West than in the East. Both the Hieronymian and Augustinian theories permitted the ecclesiastical usage of the Septuagint canon of the Old Testament, and both were agreed on the precise limits of the New Testament. But neither Augustinian theory, African conciliar decision, nor Roman episcopal letter forbade the practice of making distinctions within the canon of ecclesiastically accepted books in the manner of Athanasius, Rufinus, or Jerome. The evidence of the next thousand years shows how frequently such distinctions continued to be made. But it also reflects how ecclesiastical usage often tended to outweigh the theoretical distinctions of the scholars.

Uncertainty is reflected in the canonical lists of Cassiodorus in the middle of the sixth century. His three lists purport to be those of Jerome, Augustine and the Septuagint. Far from being troubled over the differences between them, Cassiodorus observes that they are accepted by the church of his entire region.⁹⁴ The contemporary list of Junilius Africanus distinguished between books which have complete authority, medium authority, or no authority at all. In the second category he included Chronicles, Job, Tobit, Ezra, Judith, Esther, Maccabees, five catholic

⁹³Contemporary statements bear this out. The bishops who opposed the condemnation of Pelagius asserted, "We receive the Old and New Testament according to the number of books decreed by the authority of the holy church," MPL, XLV, 1733, and the monk Bachiarus makes a similar declaration in his Libellus Fidei, MPL, XX, 1033. Cited by Costello, p. 138.

⁹⁴"De Institutione Divinarum Litterarum," XII-XIV, MPL, LXX, 1123-1126.

epistles, and the book of Revelation. Wisdom and Canticles were apparently books without authority. The list of Junilius, however, was not typical of either his region or period.⁹⁵

During the sixth century, an anonymous document of far-reaching importance appeared, the so-called Decretum Gelasianum. Parts of this document claim to have Damasus, bishop of Rome between 492 and 496 A.D., as their author, while still other sections claim the sanction of Hormisdas, Roman bishop from 514 to 523 A.D. Under the name of Gelasius, a decree bearing the title "De libris recipiendis et non recipiendis" presents a canonical list identical to that of Carthage, which "the holy Roman Catholic church receives and venerates." Nearly identical lists are included under the names of Damasus and Hormisdas, with only minor variations in order and nomenclature. The direct apostolic institution of the Roman primacy is claimed as the basis for the correctness and authority of each list. The document also enumerates writings which the church reads for edification, namely, the decisions of early synods, the writings of revered fathers, and books relating the deeds of the saints. The final chapter is a list of prohibited heretical and apocryphal books.⁹⁶

That the document has proved to be a forgery⁹⁷ should not obscure

⁹⁵Credner, p. 260.

⁹⁶Ernst von Dobschütz, Das Decretum Gelasianum De Libris Recipiendis et non Recipiendis, Texte und Untersuchungen der Altchristlichen Literatur, herausgegeben von Adolf Harnack und Carl Schmidt, 3. Reihe, 8. Band (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912), pp. 3-61.

⁹⁷The investigations of von Dobschütz have established this beyond a doubt. See also the article by Henry Howorth, "The Decretal of Damasus," The Journal of Theological Studies, XIV (1913), 321-337. An earlier, but still useful, critical study may also be found in Karl August Credner, Zur Geschichte des Kanons (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1847), pp. 148-290.

its importance. It was widely accepted throughout the Middle Ages as an authentic statement from the see of Rome,⁹⁸ and eventually found its place into the code of canon law.⁹⁹ The significance of the decree for the history of the canon lies not only in the supposedly authoritative Roman sanction it gave for neglecting all inner-canonical distinctions, but also in the claims it makes for the authority of the Roman bishop to settle such matters as the biblical canon.

At the beginning of the seventh century, Pope Gregory the Great apologized when quoting Maccabees for offering testimony from books that are not canonical "but nevertheless written for the edification of the church." At times he referred to the authors of Tobit and Wisdom as "a certain just man" or "a certain wise man," while at other times he introduced them with the terms "Scripture" or "Solomon." We learn from him that the Apostle Paul wrote fifteen epistles, even though "the church does not hold to more than fourteen."¹⁰⁰

One of the greatest churchmen of the seventh century, Isidore of Seville, repeated many of Jerome's judgments about individual books, and even his order of books is similar. He notes that only twenty-two books are accepted in the Hebrew canon, grouped as Law, Prophets, and Hagio-grapha. In addition, there is a fourth order, consisting of the "books

⁹⁸ Robert E. McNally, The Bible in the Early Middle Ages (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1959), p. 23, states: "The vast manuscript tradition of this decree is proof that it was well known throughout the West." For details of the manuscript tradition and the influence of the decree, see von Dobschütz, pp. 135-202.

⁹⁹ The complete decree was reprinted by the leading canon lawyers Burkhard of Worms, Ivo of Chartres, and Gratian of Bologna; see von Dobschütz, p. 202.

¹⁰⁰ "Moralium Libri siue Expositio in Librum B. Iob," IV, 27 and 35, MPL, LXXVI, 119 and 778. The fifteenth "Pauline" letter is the epistle to the Laodiceans; see infra, pp. 49f. See also Reuss, pp. 243-244.

not in the Hebrew canon," namely, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Ruth and I and II Maccabees. Isidore adds, "The church numbers these books among the divine books and honors and preaches them, although the Hebrews classify them as apocrypha." Elsewhere he remarks that these books have "equal authority in the church together with the remaining canonical books." In the New Testament, Isidore recalls the doubts of the Latin church with regard to Hebrews and the opposition of others to several catholic epistles, but affirms their canonicity.¹⁰¹ Isidore fails to mention the earlier doubts about the Apocalypse, no doubt because the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633 A.D. had threatened a sentence of excommunication upon anyone who did not receive it as canonical or who refused to preach from its texts at certain times of the year.¹⁰² Isidore helped keep Jerome's theory alive, even though he did not accept Jerome's conclusions.

Explicit testimonies on the canon are rare during the next few centuries. The Venerable Bede, toward the end of the eighth century, evidently counted only twenty-four books in the Old Testament and explicitly questioned the canonicity of several of the deuterocanonical books.¹⁰³ His pupil Alcuin, the tutor of Charlemagne at the beginning of the ninth century, refers to Jerome and Isidore in reckoning the book of Sirach among the apocrypha, "that is, doubtful writings," because it was not

¹⁰¹"*Etymologiarum libri XX*," 2, MPL, LXXXII, 229-235, and "*In libros Veteris ac Novi Testamenti Proemia*," MPL, LXXXIII, 155-180. See also Credner, *Geschichte*, pp. 291-294, and Olegario Garcia de la Fuente, "San Isidoro de Sevilla interprete de la Biblia," *La Ciudad de Dios*, A76 (1960), 536-559.

¹⁰²Mansi, X, 624.

¹⁰³Cosin, pp. 193-195.

written in the time of the prophets.¹⁰⁴ Alcuin's pupil, Rabanus Maurus, reflects the influence of Isidore in dividing the Old Testament into four groups, the last of which includes the deuterocanonical books. In his preface to the book of Wisdom, Rabanus notes with regard to these books that "the holy church in modern times numbers them among the Sacred Scriptures and reads them in public just as it does the other canonical Scriptures; frequently the orthodox teachers also use their statements in dogmatic treatises."¹⁰⁵

Some of the Vulgate manuscripts of this period make a clear distinction between the Hebrew canonical books and the additional books. The oldest Spanish manuscript of the Vulgate, the Codex Toletanus, has the Old Testament deuterocanonical books in a separate section following the prophets, and introduces them with the comment that although these books are not in the Hebrew canon, "the catholic church has decreed that they are to be received in the canon of Holy Scriptures because in them the Holy Spirit has foretold many mysteries about Christ and the church."¹⁰⁶ An early French manuscript follows the same enumeration and states that the additional books "are not canonical Scriptures, but are called ecclesiastical."¹⁰⁷ Most later manuscripts, however, mingle the deuterocanonical

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 196-197.

¹⁰⁵ MPL, CIX, 672. See also P. C. Spicq, Esquisse d'une Histoire de l'Exégèse Latine au Moyen Âge, Bibliothèque Thomiste, XXVI (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1944), pp. 42-43.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Samuel Berger, Histoire de la Vulgate Pendant les Premiers Siècles du Moyen Âge, reprinted from the original Paris edition of 1893 (New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 25. The famous manuscript of St. Germaine follows the same order of books and includes a similar comment, ibid., p. 67.

books among the others without distinction.¹⁰⁸

The twelfth century witnessed a revival of interest in the question of the canon. In general, these discussions reflect a strong dependence on the theories of the earlier fathers, especially Jerome. One of the most interesting treatments is that of Hugo of St. Victor. In the Old Testament, following Jerome and Isidore, Hugo enumerates the twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon which Ezra the scribe had corrected and arranged.¹⁰⁹ The remaining books are read, but "are not included in the canon."¹¹⁰ The New Testament has three orders: the Gospel, the Apostles, and the Fathers. The first two orders contain the standard twenty-seven books, but the works in the third order, which contains decretals and patristic writings, is "so limitless they cannot be numbered."¹¹¹ For Hugo, this third order is of similar authority to the third order of the Old Testament, the Hagiographa. The most striking aspect of Hugo's treatment is not his rejection of the deuterocanonical books, but his inclusion of ecclesiastical decrees and patristic writings. Not only was the tradition of the fathers the means for determining the canon, but that tradition itself was now an integral part of the church's "Sacred Scriptures."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸See Berger's "Appendice I," pp. 331-342, where he lists the order of books in 212 manuscripts of the Vulgate.

¹⁰⁹Hugh of St. Victor, The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor, translated from the Latin with an introduction and notes by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 105.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 103 and 111.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 103-104.

¹¹²Spicq states that belief in the inspiration of the fathers was frequent from the tenth to the twelfth century, and cites Lanfranc, Anselm of Laon, Rupert of Deutz, and Abelard as examples. He concludes: "C'est dire que le mot Sacra Scriptura a une signification large, et juridique plus que formellement biblique," pp. 107-108.

Peter of Cluny, a contemporary of Hugo's, acknowledged that the Old Testament deuterocanonical books are of inferior worth, but have nevertheless been received by the church. Radulphus Flaviac held that these books, "although they are read for the instruction of the church, nevertheless do not have complete authority." John Beleth, about 1160 A.D., classifies these books as apocrypha, as does Peter de Rica; the latter acknowledges however that their use in the church authenticates them. Peter Comestor lists the deuterocanonical books as apocrypha, but also includes in that category the books of Job, David, Chronicles, Daniel, Esther, and the Shepherd of Hermas. They are apocryphal, he states, because their authors are unknown; "but because their truth is not doubted, they are received by the church." If, however, neither their authors nor their truth were known, he adds, they would not be received.¹¹³ John of Salisbury, English churchman of the latter half of the twelfth century, while acknowledging only the Hebrew canon in the Old Testament, counted fifteen Pauline epistles in the New Testament, one of which was the epistle to the Laodiceans. He asserts that his canon is a "constant and undoubted tradition in the church, which enjoys such authority with all that no room for gainsaying or doubt is left in sound minds."¹¹⁴ With the exception of John of Salisbury, all of these twelfth-century churchmen accepted the twenty-seven book canon of the New Testament, and only rarely reflected the earlier doubts about some of its books. For all of them, canonicity was determined by the church's acceptance of a book.

¹¹³The statements of the above men on the canon are cited by Hody, p. 655, cols. 79-84.

¹¹⁴Hody, p. 656, col. 85; Westcott, pp. 472-474.

Distinctions within the Old Testament canon continued to be made throughout the thirteenth century, but with decreasing frequency. John of Rochelle included the deuterocanonical writings among the books of the Hebrew canon in distinguishing between books of examples and books of exhortation. But the canonical writings are "of primary authority," while others are "of secondary authority."¹¹⁵ His contemporary, Cardinal Hugo of St. Cher, included the Shepherd of Hermas in describing the deuterocanonical writings as "apocrypha." For him, a book was apocryphal when either its author or truth was unknown. The church had received the deuterocanonical books because it was convinced of their truth, "not for proving the faith, but for instruction in morals."¹¹⁶

On the other hand, Albert the Great not only accepted all the books of the Septuagint canon as canonical, but accorded them full authority because the church has received them.¹¹⁷ His pupil, Thomas Aquinas, likewise accepted the larger canon without making any careful distinction between the books of the Hebrew canon and the others. For apologetic purposes, he is willing to avoid the citation of proofs from books not in the Hebrew canon, but he clearly asserts that "the catholic church receives such books in the number of sacred scriptures."¹¹⁸ He treated the authorship of Hebrews at great length, accepting the Pauline

¹¹⁵Spicq, p. 144.

¹¹⁶Hugo writes, "Hi quia sunt dubii, sub Canone non numerantur; sed quia vera canunt, Ecclesia suscipit illos," cited by Hody, p. 656, col. 90.

¹¹⁷Albert Fries, "Der Schriftkanon bei Albert dem Grossen," Divus Thomas, III. Serie, 29. Band (1951), 345-368 and 402-428. This useful article contains perceptive comments on other men as well.

¹¹⁸P. Synave, "Le Canon Scripturaire de Saint Thomas d'Aquin," Revue Biblique, XXXIII (1924), pp. 526 and 529.

authorship.¹¹⁹ For both Albert and Thomas, the question of a book's authorship was of less significance for determining canonicity than its reception by the church.¹²⁰

William of Occam, the important fourteenth century nominalist whose influence extended well into the sixteenth century, expressed a very clear distinction between the deuterocanonical writings and the books of the Hebrew canon. He wrote:

According to Jerome's prologue and Gregory's book on morals, the books of Judith, Tobit, Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom are not to be received for confirming anything in matters of faith. For both Jerome and Gregory assert that while the church reads the books of Judith, Tobit, and Maccabees, she does not receive them among the canonical scriptures. Likewise, the church reads these two books, namely Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, for the edification of the people, but not for confirming the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas.

Their authority, he continues, is similar to that of the expositions of bishops and others who lived after biblical times. Unless a teaching derived from them agrees with what is taught in the canonical Scriptures, it is not to be received "with the same reverence as is necessary for confirming some aspect of the catholic faith."¹²¹

The great exegete of the fourteenth century, Nicolaus of Lyra, explicitly rejected the canonicity of the Old Testament deuterocanonical

¹¹⁹His comments on Hebrews are quoted in Spicq, p. 154.

¹²⁰Thomas said with reference to the deuterocanonical books: "Unde ex auctoritate auctorum robur non habent, sed magis ex Ecclesiae receptione"; cited by Synave, p. 529. With particular reference to Albert, Fries states: "Nicht einmal der apostolische Ursprung eines Buches ist entscheidend, vielmehr, wie es früher und später, bei Augustin, Hugo von St. Viktor, Thomas und Driedo heisst: Receptio per Ecclesiam," p. 428.

¹²¹Cited in Hody, p. 657, col. 94. For a brief treatment of the canon in the thirteenth century fathers, see C. Spicq, "Le Canon des Livres Saintes au XIII^e Siècle," Les Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques, I (1941-1942), 424-431.

books, maintaining that they are received by the church to be read only for the information they contain on morals. Consequently, "their authority for proving those things which come into contention is held to be less." His reason is that they are "neither in the Hebrew nor Scriptural canon," having been written by Josephus and other writers and later inserted in the Vulgate edition.¹²² Certain other apocryphal writings such as Baruch and III and IV Esdras are of still lower authority. In spite of his criticism of apocryphal writings, Lyra inserts the Prayer of Manasseh between II Chronicles and Ezra.¹²³ His New Testament canon had the standard twenty-seven books, but he discussed the authorship of Hebrews at great length, concluding that the "use and custom of the church" in regarding the epistle as Pauline were correct.¹²⁴

A fourteenth century prologue prefixed to several early editions of Wyclif's English Bible makes similar distinctions in the Old Testament. Books not found in the Hebrew canon are called "Apocrifa: that ys withoute autorite of byleue." Appealing to Jerome, the author places in this category all the deuterocanonical books, mentioning also the Prayer of Manasseh and the additions to Daniel and Esther. Because of its recognition at Nicea, the author holds that Judith may be taken as canonical, but in general the church "redeth Judith and Tobye and the bookes of Machabeis, but resseyueth not them among Holy Scriptures; so the Church redeth these two bokes Ecclesiastici and Sapiens to edifyng of ye peple,

¹²²Ibid., p. 657, col. 96.

¹²³Spicq, Esquisse, p. 153.

¹²⁴Ibid., pp. 155-156.

not to conferme ye authorite of techyng of holy Church."125

Not all fourteenth century voices attributed lesser authority to the deuterocanonical books, however. Robert of Basevorn, in 1322 A.D., noted that the Bibles of his day contained many books that are questioned and some that are not authentic. Among the latter, he places III and IV Esdras, Psalm 151, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the epistle of Paul to Laodiceans. The former include the epistle of Jude, Ecclesiasticus, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the Prayer of Jeremiah because their authors are not certain. He reported that some called Judith and Tobit apocryphal and rejected Maccabees and Wisdom because of their Greek character, while others regarded the additions to Daniel and Esther as apocryphal. But, Robert adds, "in these days all of these books are accepted on account of their antiquity." About the remaining books of both Testaments, Robert assures us that "there is no doubt, no confusion."126

But there was doubt, confusion, and a great deal of freedom about the precise limits of the canon. An example of this was the frequent acceptance during this period and into the sixteenth century of the epistle to the Laodiceans. Purporting to be the letter mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Col. 2:16, the epistle is of uncertain origin. Jerome pronounced against it, but Gregory the Great affirmed its genuineness. From his time onward, it was found in many manuscripts of the New Testament. It was especially popular in the English church from the ninth to the twelfth

125Cited by Hody, p. 658, col. 101. Wyclif assigned only limited authority to the deuterocanonical books, which he called apocrypha. See his De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, edited and translated by Rudolf Buddensieg (London: Trübner and Co., 1905), I, p. 242.

126Cited by Spicq, Esquisse, pp. 155-156, n. 2.

century, as the witness of Alfric and John of Salisbury suggests. Various Bohemian editions include it, as did some German and Dutch Bibles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹²⁷ Freedom at the edges of the canon is also reflected in the frequent inclusion of books such as III and IV Esdras, III and IV Maccabees, or the Prayer of Manasseh in the manuscripts of the Vulgate.¹²⁸

It was probably not an attempt to end this freedom that led Pope Eugenius IV to issue a list of canonical books on February 4, 1442, in connection with the Council of Florence. The precise purpose of his canonical list is somewhat doubtful, and its authority was even questioned at Trent.¹²⁹ In light of the council's attempt to unite Eastern and Western churches and the presence of the list in a union document, it seems likely that Eugenius IV wished to indicate that certain books traditionally questioned in the East, such as the book of Revelation and the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, enjoyed a more authoritative status in the West. The list of books is offered as a confession of faith, not a dogma, and no condemnation is expressed toward those who do not accept it. Acknowledging the books of both Testaments to be inspired by God,

¹²⁷Bernhard Pick, "The Apocryphal Epistles of St. Paul: I. The Epistle to the Laodiceans," International Journal of Apocrypha, No. 31, Series VIII (October, 1912), 73-76.

¹²⁸See Berger's list of books contained in several Vulgate manuscripts, pp. 331-342, and Spicq, Esquisse, pp. 156-158.

¹²⁹Georgius Hofmann, "Introductio," Epistolae Pontificae Ad Concilium Florentinum Spectantes, edidit Georgius Hofmann, Concilium Florentinum, Series A, Pars III (Rome: Pontificum Institutum, 1946), p. v. The canon list is included in the Bull "Cantate Domino," printed in this volume as "Bulla unionis Coptorum," no. 258, pp. 45-65. For a brief account of the circumstances surrounding its promulgation, see Joseph Gill, Constance et Bâle-Florence (Paris: Éditions de L'Orante, 1965), p. 268.

Eugenius lists the inspired books which the church "receives and venerates." Except for minor changes in book sequence, the list is identical to that of the Council of Carthage. No indication of doubt or inferior status is adduced with regard to any listed book. On the other hand, no book is consecrated as canonical which had not had a place in the Latin church for at least a thousand years.¹³⁰

The bull of Eugenius can be understood as the cementing of a thousand-year tradition in the Western church. But in its own time it did not have that effect, for critical voices continued to be heard from some of the church's most illustrious sons. To be sure, the distinguished biblical theologian, Bernard of Sienna, was no doubt representative of many of his contemporaries in accepting the full canonicity of books traditionally questioned. Not only does Bernard quote from all such books without suggesting their inferiority, but he uses the terms "doubtful" or "apocryphal" to refer chiefly to heretical writings. Basing himself on St. Augustine and John Duns Scotus, Bernard appeals to the authority of the church: "It is therefore irrational to accept something of the canon and not to accept something else, since the Catholic Church, which I believe, receives as certain the whole canon without distinction." However, since Bernard's treatment of the canon was written between 1430 and 1440, it does not reflect the influence of the Council of Florence.¹³¹

A more critical attitude is displayed by other outstanding figures

¹³⁰Mansi, XXXI, B, 1736-1738. The text is also given by Henricus Denzinger, editor, Enchiridion Symbolorum, editio emendata et aucta a Adolphus Schönmetzer (Barcinone et al.: Herder, 1965), pp. 338-339, no. 706.

¹³¹Seraphinus M. Gozzo, "De S. Scripturae Canone Iuxta S. Bernardinum Senensem O. F. M.," Antonianum, XXXIX (1964), 399-406.

of the fifteenth century, however. Basing his judgment on Jerome, the Spaniard Alphonsus Tostatus regarded the deuterocanonical books as "apocrypha." He asserts: "None of these books, even though it is found among the other books of the Bible and is read in the church, is of such authority that the church may argue from it in proving any truth, nor does the church receive them for that purpose." Such books lack full authority because the church does not know whether the Holy Spirit inspired them. Nevertheless, the church permits them to be used by individual Christians and also reads them in her offices because of the many devout things they contain. Because the church receives these books, he acknowledges that they have probative value for Christians, but insists that "against Jews and heretics, they are not efficacious for proving those things which come into dispute."¹³²

In a similar vein, Antoninus, the bishop of Florence during the council, recognized a four part canon of the Old Testament, the last part containing the "apocrypha." Antoninus asserts that the "holy church receives also the apocrypha as true and venerates them as useful and moral," but does not regard their contents as convincing in dealing with disputed doctrinal matters. He recalls that neither Thomas nor Nicolaus of Lyra held the authority of Tobit to be equal to that of the other books of the Bible in apologetic matters, and concludes, "From this it follows that they have the same kind of authority as the sayings of the saints approved by the church."¹³³

A few years after Tostatus and Antoninus, the learned Dionysius

¹³²Ibid., pp. 388-391.

¹³³Ibid., pp. 391-393.

Carthusianus echoed their sentiments on the Old Testament canon. His comments on Tobit are typical of his point of view. He wrote:

This book is not reckoned among the canonical Scriptures, but mother church has no doubts about its truth. She therefore receives and reads it, not for the confirmation and proof of those things which come into contention, that is, with regard to matters to be believed, but for information on morals.

Although he questions the full authority of the deuterocanonical books, he is careful to add in each instance that the church does not question their truth.¹³⁴

That Tostatus, Antoninus, and Dionysius made no reference to the Council of Florence, in spite of their obvious devotion to the authority of the church, suggests either that they did not understand its canon to be a binding article of faith or that they did not regard their own judgment to be in disagreement with it. It is clear, however, that the Florentine decree did not end the uncertainty about the precise limits of the church's authoritative biblical canon.

Summary

The church's tradition on the biblical canon reflects an unwavering certainty with regard to the majority of her sacred writings in both Testaments. Although writings like the Prayer of Manasseh and the epistle to the Laodiceans were occasionally found among the biblical books, there was also general agreement about the external limits of the canon. Within those limits, the New Testament writings were less frequently disputed than those of the Old Testament. The Eastern church continued to have reservations about the Apocalypse, and the Western Church continued to reflect its earlier misgivings about the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. The

¹³⁴Cited in Hody, p. 661, col. 116.

Eastern Church occasionally echoed earlier doubts about the book of Esther, and generally regarded the additional writings of the Septuagint as non-canonical. The Western church, on the other hand, clearly accepted these writings. But the nature of that acceptance was debated throughout her history. Following the theory of Rufinus and Jerome about the priority of the Hebrew canon, a large number of the church's influential teachers regarded these writings as useful, edifying, and true, but as not possessing sufficient authority to establish dogmas. But ecclesiastical practice did not always follow scholarly theory, with the result that no distinction was made by many others. The later Vulgate manuscript tradition is a witness to both tendencies, for these manuscripts not only included all books of the Septuagint canon interspersed with those of the Hebrew canon, but in most instances also included the prologues of Jerome or other scholars where a firm distinction was usually made.¹³⁵

The coexistence of these two tendencies makes it difficult to evaluate the use of such terms as "canonical" and "apocryphal" during these years. For some the "canon" designated the outer limits of books accepted by the church, while for others it applied only to those writings of primary authority. Generally, "apocryphal" writings were those which stood beyond the outer limits of the canon, but others, like Jerome, used the term to designate the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament. For others, like Hugo of St. Victor, even the term "Holy Scripture" denoted a larger collection of writings than did the term "canon."

More significant than the terminological ambiguity, however, is the fact that such divergent views could exist side by side without creating

¹³⁵Berger, pp. 331-342.

dissension in the church or even being discussed by many of the leading churchmen. This is not surprising. For the line of demarcation between Scripture and tradition had grown very thin. The co-inherence of Scripture, tradition, and church found in Hugo of St. Victor had become common during the subsequent centuries.¹³⁶ Within this triumvirate, the power of the Roman pope had become increasingly stronger. The precise limits of the canon were not of crucial importance, for the disputed books were at the very least a part of tradition, and the church was the ultimate canon above both canonical Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition. The church continued to distinguish between the authority of Scripture and that of other writings,¹³⁷ but in principle the need for this distinction was not acute. Even those who placed certain Old Testament writings on a secondary level did so because they understood that the church had received them in that way. On both sides, it was openly acknowledged that the church's canon of acceptable books was wider than the Hebrew canon, for the ultimate criterion of canonicity was authoritative reception by the church. On that point, the tradition of the post-fifth century church is unanimous.

¹³⁶In addition to the many indications of this tendency in the previous pages, see George H. Tavard, Holy Writ or Holy Church (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), especially pp. 12-43.

¹³⁷Paul de Vooght, "L'évolution de Rapport Église-Écriture du XIII^e au XV^e Siècle," Ephemerides Theologicae Louvaniensis, XXXVIII (1962), 84. De Vooght states: "L'unanimité des théologiens scolastiques à considérer per modum unius l'Écriture, la tradition et la théologie tendrait à faire oublier que ces mêmes scolastiques ont tout de même unanimement circonscrit sans erreur le canon des Écritures inspirées, à part de tous les autres écrits. Ils surent que le canon avait été fixé par l'Église et qu'il contenait, et lui seul, des écrits à l'abri de l'erreur."

CHAPTER II

HUMANISM AND THE BIBLICAL CANON

Christians at the beginning of the sixteenth century, like their fathers of previous centuries, believed that the church had faithfully preserved the prophetic and apostolic writings as the most important part of her tradition. Some remembered the secondary authority assigned to certain Old Testament writings and the early doubts about the epistle to the Hebrews expressed by Jerome and kept alive throughout her tradition. Many others, encouraged by the undifferentiated use of all books in the church's Bible, knew of no distinctions within the canon. But there was general agreement that the church is her own criterion of canonicity. In the sixteenth century, however, the impact of humanism on theology was to challenge the latter assumptions. In 1515, Erasmus of Rotterdam gave classic expression to the humanistic creed when he wrote: "He who wishes to be a true theologian must be versed in the sources."¹

In the question of the biblical canon, as in many others, the attempt to gain a more accurate picture of the past by a return to the sources was of more than passing significance for a church which had relied so heavily on its own tradition to authenticate itself. This chapter illustrates attitudes toward the canon found in the earliest decades of the century, and then sets forth the canonical theories of three men who

¹"In fontibus versetur oportet, qui velet esse vere Theologus," in "Ennaratio Primi Psalmi," Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera Omnia, recognovit Joannes Clericus (Unveränderter reprographischen Nachdruck der Ausgabe Leiden, Lugduni Batavorum, 1703-1706; Hildesheim: Georg Olm Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), V, 183. This edition is hereafter cited as LB.)

reflected the impact of humanistic methodology: Erasmus, Karlstadt, and Cajetan. As illustrated by these men, this chapter contends that the chief impact of humanism on the question of biblical canon was in its use of historical and literary criticism to awaken long dormant doubts concerning the New Testament antilegomena and their traditional apostolic authorship. In so doing, humanism provided the historical basis for the subsequent criticism of the canon during the sixteenth century. Moreover, in its clear preference for the early tradition of the church, the humanistic critique of the canon not only challenged the prevailing view that the church's tradition was continuous and unbroken, but raised a question that was to be debated throughout the century: Could the church's later consciousness overcome the doubts of an earlier period about the canonicity of questioned books? That the church's initial reaction to the humanistic critique was clearly negative is evidenced in the censures of Erasmus and Cajetan by the theological faculty of Paris, also reported in this chapter.

The Early Years

A Latin Bible published at the beginning of the century by John Froben of Basel illustrates both the critical and uncritical attitudes toward the canon found throughout the Western tradition. The Vulgate text is printed in the center of the page, surrounded on all sides by the comments of Nicolaus of Lyra and the Ordinary Gloss. Jerome's prologues are included together with Brito's comments on them. The additional books of the Septuagint canon are interspersed with those of the Hebrew canon, yet in each instance Jerome's critical prologues introduce them. In addition, the Prayer of Manasseh and III and IV Esdras are included.

The uncritical tendency is thus given prominence by the order of books, the inclusion of non-canonical writings, and the much greater space given to the gloss and commentary than to the text itself. The critical tendency is evident in an occasional comment by Lyra or Brito, in the prologues of Jerome, and in Jerome's letter to Paulinus, printed as the prologue to the entire Bible.²

The careful reader of this edition, however, could have had his canonical confusion relieved somewhat by studying the prefatory remarks to the first volume entitled, "De libris bibliae canonicis et non canonicis." The anonymous author of this preface³ begins by faulting those who hold that all books contained in the Bible are "to be revered and honored with equal veneration, being ignorant of how to distinguish between canonical books and the non-canonical books which the Jews reckon among the apocrypha."⁴ He notes that this situation has caused ridicule, disturbance, and scandal. To enable the reader to make the proper distinctions, the author indicates that the canonical books of the Old Testament

²Biblia cum glossa ordinaria et expositione lyrae litterali et morali, (Basel: Johann Froben ac Johann Petri, 1498), VI tomi. This edition has no page numbers.

Later editions of this Bible were published in 1502 and 1506. For a description of these editions, see T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, compilers, Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society (London: The Bible House, 1911), II 3, 912.

³The most likely conjecture is Sebastian Brant, who dedicates this edition to John of Dalberg in comments preceding the preface. This is also the suggestion of Humfredus Hody, De Bibliorum Textibus Originalibus, Versionibus Graecis, et Latina Vulgata (Oxonii: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1705), p. 661, col. 118.

⁴"Quia sunt multi qui . . . existimant omnes libros qui in Biblia continentur pari veneratione esse reverendos atque adorandos, nescientes distinguere inter libros canonicos et non canonicos, quos Hebraei inter apocrypha computant," n.p.

are the twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon listed by Jerome and Eusebius, and that "whatever is outside of these is to be placed among the apocrypha." They are called apocrypha because their authors are unknown, he claims, and therefore the church cannot be certain of their divine inspiration.

Such books are nevertheless good and useful, and they do not disagree with the canonical scriptures; on that account, the church permits them to be read "by the faithful for devotion and information in morals." But their authority is not adequate "for proving those things which come into question or contention, or for confirming the authority of the church's dogmas."⁵ Among the non-canonical apocrypha, however, a distinction must be made between those of greater and lesser authority. Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, Wisdom, and Sirach have greater authority because of the high regard which Augustine and others had for them. But the books of Baruch and III and IV Esdras are of lesser authority because both Jerome and Augustine held them in low regard. The author argues that Jerome cannot be used as an authority for including Judith and Tobit among the canonical writings, because the manuscripts used as the basis for this appeal are manifestly in error.⁶ He notes further that the textual additions to Esther and Daniel are apocryphal, and that Rufinus was in agreement with Jerome's position.

All twenty-seven books of the New Testament are of canonical authority,

⁵"Ideo ecclesia eos legit et permittit, ut ad devotionem et ad morum informationem a fidelibus legantur. Eorum tum auctoritas ad probandum ea quae veniunt in dubiis aut in contentione, et ad confirmandam ecclesiasticorum dogmatum auctoritatem, non reputatur idonea," n.p.

⁶The author is referring to the substitution of "hagiographa" for "apocrypha" in several manuscripts; cf. *supra*, p. 31, n. 73. He notes that this error "in omnibus quos viderim codicibus invenitur," n.p.

however, as the testimonies of Jerome, Augustine, and Isidore reveal. Before Jerome, the author continues, there were doubts in the church about the canonicity of Hebrews, Jude, II and III John. No mention is made of similar doubts about II Peter and Revelation. But, the author concludes, all books "are now received by the approbation of all."⁷

Because of its limited circulation, this remarkable treatise did not exert wide influence. Yet it clearly contains the seeds of criticism that were to ripen with time. Gone is the explicit appeal to ecclesiastical authority. In its place is the argumentation from history as represented by Jerome, Eusebius, and Rufinus in their appeal to the more ancient canon of the Jews. But the setting of this treatise in a Bible edition reflecting few critical tendencies also illustrates the tenor of the times.

More representative of the new learning was a Bible edition prepared in Spain under the direction and financial support of Franciscus Cardinal Ximenes, and commonly known as the Complutensian Polyglot.⁸ Begun in 1502, printed between 1514 and 1517, and published in 1522, this six-volume work was dedicated to Pope Leo X.⁹ The first preface calls

⁷"Sed tamen omnium approbatione iam sunt recepti," n.p.

⁸Biblia Polyglotta in Academia Complutensi (Alcala: Industria Arnaldi Guillelmi de Brocario, 1514-1517), VI tomi.

The most complete description of this edition is Darlow and Moule, II 2, 2-26, no. 1412. Also useful is James P. R. Lyell, Cardinal Ximenes, Statesman, Ecclesiastic, Soldier and Man of Letters with an Account of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (London: Grafton and Co., 1917), especially pp. 24-52. See also R. V. G. Tasker, "The Complutensian Polyglot," The Church Quarterly Review, CLIV (1953), 197-210.

⁹The delay between printing and publication has never been satisfactorily explained. However, it appears that Erasmus had obtained an exclusive privilege for his edition throughout the empire for four years. See Lyell, p. 35, and Tasker, p. 203.

attention to the many errors in the Vulgate manuscripts caused by the ignorance and negligence of the copyists. This edition proposes to remedy the situation by following the advice of Jerome and Augustine and correcting the Latin text on the basis of the original Hebrew and Greek. The original texts are also printed, for "every theologian should also be able to drink of that water which springs up to eternal life at the fountain-head itself." To carry out this undertaking, the preface continues, we have had recourse to the most notable philologists and have made "researches in every direction for the best and most ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Our object is to revive the hitherto dormant study of the Holy Scriptures."¹⁰

The work of editing this vast project was entrusted to Diego Lopez de Zuniga, known also as Stunica, who was assisted by three professors of Alcala: Antonio de Lebrija, Demetrius Ducas of Crete, and Nunez de Guzman. They were aided by three converted Jews and accomplished Hebraists, Alphonso, Coronel, and de Zamora.¹¹ In the first four volumes, comprising the Old Testament, the Latin Vulgate is printed in the center of the page with the Hebrew text to the left and the Septuagint text together with an interlinear literal Latin translation printed on the right.¹² At the end of each volume is appended a list of errors in the Vulgate. Volume

¹⁰Biblia Polyglotta, I, Prologue, n.p.

¹¹Lyell, pp. 27-28. Deno Geanakoplos, Greek Scholars in Venice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 223-255, has an excellent discussion of the role played by Ducas in the production of the Complutensian Polyglot.

¹²The preface to the reader, I, n.p., explains the symbolism of this arrangement of texts: just as Jesus was crucified between two thieves, so the Latin church stands between the synagog and the Greek church, alone immovable in the truth.

five contains the first printed Greek text of the New Testament together with the Vulgate translation. The last volume is a Hebrew and Chaldaic lexicon.

This monument in the history of the biblical text is not without significance for the history of the canon. In the Old Testament, the "Hebrew truth" was not only the criterion for the accurate text, but for the canon as well. In the preface to the reader, the twenty-two book Hebrew canon together with its division into Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa is adopted. Those books having only a Greek and Latin text "are truly outside the canon." The church "receives them rather for the edification of the people than for confirming the authority of the ecclesiastical dogmas."¹³ Jerome's epistle to Paulinus follows the preface to the reader in volume one, and his prefaces to the Old Testament books are included throughout the first four volumes. The Prayer of Manasseh is printed at the end of II Chronicles, but with the reminder that it is included in neither the Hebrew nor Greek canon. Similarly, the fourth volume contains the third book of Maccabees, but it is explained that this writing is not even to be found in the Vulgate. The canonical additions of the Septuagint are very obvious to the reader because the parallel column normally containing a Hebrew text has been left blank. The editors sometimes add an explanatory note, such as the following comment after II Maccabees: "The books of the Maccabees are not in the canon of the Jews, but nevertheless are included among the divine books as historical accounts."¹⁴

¹³"At vero libri extra canone, quos Ecclesias potius ad aedificationem populi quam ad auctoritatem ecclesiasticorum dogmatum confirmandam recipit," n.p.

¹⁴"... inter divinorum voluminum annotantur historias," IV, n.p.

The authors of the New Testament antilegomena are all identified as apostles. Critical comments about them are rare. The comma Johanneum is included as part of the sacred text.¹⁵ The prologue to Hebrews explains that the apostle Paul did not give his name in the epistle both because of modesty and because his Jewish readers tended to regard him more as a missionary to the Gentiles than as a true Jew. It maintains that Paul wrote the epistle in Hebrew, and that after his death "the evangelist Luke, retaining his meaning and order, composed it in Greek."¹⁶ This same thought is repeated in the prologue to the New Testament, included at the beginning of volumes one and five, where it is further suggested that Matthew was also written originally in Hebrew.

The Complutensian Polyglot gave scholarly witness to the priority of the Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture, and made it possible for other scholars to examine at first hand the Hebrew Bible and compare its contents with their traditional Vulgate text. It represented the kind of humanistic work that was to issue in more extreme judgments on certain books than were envisaged by its editors or illustrious sponsor, Cardinal Ximenes. But it was a rather unique Bible edition for its time. That most editions current in the early decades of the sixteenth century did not exhibit such critical tendencies can be seen by examining the fourteen German editions issued before the Luther Bible. Not only do all of them contain the deuterocanonical books interspersed among the

¹⁵Stunica faulted Erasmus for omitting this passage from his edition. When a manuscript containing this section was called to Erasmus' attention, he restored it to the text of I John 5 in his 1522 edition. Cf. Samuel Berger, La Bible au Seizième Siècle (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1879), p. 59.

¹⁶Biblia Polyglotta, V, n.p.

others in the Old Testament without critical comment, but they are augmented by the inclusion of several other books. In all of them, for example, the spurious letter to the Laodiceans is included as a genuine Pauline letter. Such Bibles evidently reached a much wider audience than did the more critical editions of Alcalá or Basel. Their uncritically assembled contents not only reflect, but undoubtedly helped shape, prevailing attitudes.¹⁷

But the return to the sources so characteristic of humanism in general, was gathering momentum in these early years of the sixteenth century. Humanistic studies in philology and antiquity were becoming an important factor in the revival of biblical theology. The technique of printing with movable type had developed to the point where books representing the new learning could be rapidly disseminated. And the church's scholars were quick to apply humanistic techniques to the study of Christian sources. In 1505 Erasmus published the Annotationes of 15th century scholar Lorenzo Valla, who had insisted that Scripture must be interpreted by the laws of grammar and language and freed from the errors of copyists.¹⁸ Jacques Lefèvre prepared a new Latin translation of Paul's epistles, while insisting on the priority of the Greek text over the hallowed Latin

¹⁷ Kenneth A. Strand, German Bibles Before Luther (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966). See also the same author's Early Low-German Bibles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967). Two older studies are still very helpful for this period: J. M. Reu, Luther's German Bible: An Historical Presentation Together with a Collection of Sources (Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), pp. 27-34, and Wilhelm Walther, Die deutsche Bibelübersetzung des Mittelalters (Braunschweig: Hellmuth Wollermann, 1889-1892), pp. 113-118.

¹⁸ W. Schwarz, Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation, Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), pp. 132-134.

translation.¹⁹ The Hebrew revival had one of its most influential spokesmen in John Reuchlin, who insisted on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament as the only means to a correct interpretation. His De Rudimentis Hebraicis of 1506 made it possible for others to follow his example and return to the sources.²⁰ The work of Reuchlin, Lefèvre, and others who shared their convictions if not their ability, was destined to weaken the church's confidence in the Vulgate and the commentaries based upon it.²¹ Furthermore, by drawing attention to the original texts, it was possible to go back to a tradition behind that of the schoolmen. In weakening the authority of the Vulgate and the medieval tradition, humanism was also able to bring a new perspective to the discussion of the biblical canon. Nowhere is this

¹⁹Schwarz, pp. 173-175; Henry S. Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation (Second Edition; New York, Harper and Brothers, 1960), pp. 584-586; and Henry Howorth, "The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon according to the Continental Reformers," The Journal of Theological Studies, IX (1908), 190-193 and 209-212.

Lefèvre translated the New Testament into French in 1523 and the entire Bible in 1530. Howorth describes his canon, which included all New Testament books without distinction, but separated the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament into a distinct class. Lefèvre notes that they are not canonical books, "but on account of the good doctrine and prophecy found in them, they are received and approved by the church"; cited by Howorth, p. 210.

Interestingly, Lefèvre regarded other ancient Christian literature, particularly the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, as having a near-canonical status. See Eugene F. Rice, "The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity: Lefèvre d'Étaples and his Circle," Studies in the Renaissance, IX (1962), 126-160, especially 134-136.

²⁰Schwarz, pp. 61-91, and Lewis W. Spitz, The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 61-80.

²¹In addition to the works of Schwarz, Spitz, and Lucas, a useful discussion of the religious influence of humanism is given by H. A. Enno Van Gelder, The Two Reformations in the Sixteenth Century, translated by Jan F. Finlay (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961). Also useful is the article by John O'Malley, "Historical Thought and the Reform Crisis of the Early Sixteenth Century," Theological Studies, XXVIII (1967), 531-548.

better exemplified than in the work of the prince of the humanists, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Erasmus

Erasmus had distinguished himself as a man of letters long before he published his monumental New Testament in 1516. But it was his pioneering labors with the Greek text of the New Testament as well as his careful attention to the study of the early fathers that led him to re-examine particularly the canon of the New Testament. Among the fathers, Erasmus especially admired Jerome, a factor of considerable significance in appraising his attitude toward the canon. As a result of his critical investigations, Erasmus was led to evaluate seven New Testament writings differently from most of his contemporaries.²²

In notes accompanying his 1516 edition of the New Testament, Erasmus maintained that the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by the Apostle

²²On Erasmus' high regard for Jerome, see Schwarz, pp. 124-128. Erasmus published a nine-volume edition of Jerome's works in Basel between 1516 and 1520.

Erasmus' position on the New Testament canon has been treated more frequently than that of other humanists. Brief accounts can be found in most ecclesiastical encyclopedias, New Testament introductions, and standard histories of the canon. Among the latter, the best treatment is that of Johannes Leipoldt, Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, II. Mittelalter und Neuzeit (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908), pp. 13-32. For a brief discussion of his position in the context of his general hermeneutical methodology, see the recent study by John William Aldridge, The Hermeneutic of Erasmus, Basel Studies of Theology No. 2, edited by the Faculty of Theology, Basel (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966), especially pp. 64-81.

Our treatment of Erasmus agrees with such standard works in calling attention to his use of historical and literary criticism on the canon, but goes beyond them in two respects: one, in describing his attitude toward the Old Testament canon; and, two, in treating his reply to the censure of the Paris faculty in greater detail. Without this latter emphasis, Erasmus' position on the canon appears to be more critical than it actually and ultimately was.

Paul, even though it is closely akin to the "spirit and soul of Paul." The authorship of James, he reports, was questioned in ancient times. Likewise, the apostolic authorship of II Peter, Jude, and II and III John is questionable. It is probable that the latter was written by John the presbyter. The Apocalypse is clearly not the work of the Apostle John and its canonical status is dubious.²³ Through his work with the ancient Greek manuscripts, Erasmus was convinced that certain portions of the New Testament text also were not original. He omitted the comma Johanneum in I John 5:7, one of the church's most important texts for the Trinitarian dogma. He noted that neither the ending of Mark's Gospel nor the narrative of the adulterous woman in the eighth chapter of John belonged to the original text of the New Testament. But he clearly regarded the latter as canonical, for he notes that "it is now received everywhere, especially among the Latins" and is "without sin."²⁴

How did Erasmus reach these conclusions? He gives three reasons for his judgment on Hebrews. First, the epistle was not recognized by the Roman church at the time of Jerome; if Paul had been the author, this would not have happened. Second, the style of this letter differs from that of the Pauline letters. The explanation of others that Paul wrote it in Hebrew, and that Luke or someone else rendered it in Greek is not satisfactory. For, he insists, the stylistic difference is not

²³Novum Instrumentum Omne, diligenter ab Erasmo Roterodama recognitum et emendatum (Basel: Johann Froben 1516), pp. 600, 601, 606, 617, 669 [619], and 675 [625].

The fourth edition of Erasmus' New Testament, published in 1524, is printed in LB, VI.

²⁴"Nos tamen, quoniam iam ubique recepta est, praesertim apud latinos, noluimus suo movere loco. Sine peccato est," Novum Instrumentum, p. 362.

limited to individual words and phrases; the whole train of thought is different. Third, the epistle appears to tolerate heresy, for in various places it suggests that one who sins after his Baptism cannot be forgiven. All in all, Erasmus concludes, the author is probably Clement of Rome, as Jerome suggested. Nevertheless, the epistle is "worthy of being read by Christians on many counts."²⁵

James is criticized on similar grounds. Not only was its authorship questioned in former times, but it "does not seem to present in every part the dignity and gravity which we look for in an apostle." Moreover, the absence of Hebraisms in the letter strongly suggests that James of Jerusalem could not have been its author. Nevertheless, Erasmus readily affirms the authority of the epistle.²⁶ With regard to II Peter, Erasmus' own opinion is less evident. He reports that the ancient church had debated over its genuineness and notes that its style differs from that of I Peter and does not measure up to the majesty of the prince of the apostles.²⁷ In his later reply to the Paris faculty, Erasmus suggests, however, that this letter may have been a pious forgery. Those who questioned its Petrine authorship in the early church were not ignorant, he asserts. They could easily read that the author claimed to have been with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. But "they suspected that the epistle was written by someone who wished to have it read under the name of Peter," and who therefore mentioned the transfiguration. The early suspicion, he notes, came "from the style, the passion and vigor

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 600-601; LB, VI, 1023-1024.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 601 and 606; LB, VI, 1025 and 1038.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 617; LB, VI, 1068.

of the sentences, which in part they regarded as an attempted imitation of the other epistle, and in part as not corresponding to the majesty of the prince of the apostolic order."²⁸ Erasmus does not give his own opinion, however.

Erasmus rejected the Johannine authorship of II and III John simply on the basis of Jerome's judgment that they were written by John the Presbyter.²⁹ His only comment on Jude is that it was earlier suspected because it cites a Jewish apocryphal book, the book of Enoch.³⁰ In discussing the Apocalypse, however, Erasmus is more explicit. First, he recalls the disagreement about the book in the early church, noting that Jerome claimed it was not accepted at his time by the Greeks because many of them found nothing of "apostolic dignity" in it. Second, it appeared suspicious to Erasmus that the author writes "I, John" so often, for an apostle typically does not exalt himself. This suggests that the author was seeking to gain apostolic stature for his writing. Third, Erasmus calls attention to its difference in style from the first epistle and fourth Gospel. Finally, he notes that in various Greek manuscripts the book is entitled the Revelation of "John the Theologian," not "John the Evangelist."³¹

It is clear that Erasmus grounded his judgment on critical expressions of the ancient church, especially those of Jerome. In many instances his

²⁸"...quae partim videbantur ad imitationem alterius epistolae effictae, partim non perinde respondentis apostolici ordinis principis majestati," LB, IX, 866.

²⁹Novum Instrumentum, p. 669 [619]; LB, VI, 1088.

³⁰Ibid., p. 670 [620]; LB, VI, 1090.

³¹Ibid., p. 675 [625]; LB, VI, 1123-1126.

criticism is literally identical to that offered by the fourth century scholar. This is especially evident when he appeals to dogmatic factors, as he does with regard to Hebrews and Jude.³² But a new element had entered his criticism, for in several cases he evaluated the content of the controverted books from the standpoint of style. This is particularly clear in his remarks on Hebrews, where arguments from style count heavily. Yet literary style alone was not decisive for him, as his remarks on Ephesians indicate. Well aware that the style of that epistle differs greatly from other Pauline letters, Erasmus declares that its content is nevertheless Pauline.³³ But this criterion was hardly decisive, for on similar grounds he could have defended the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. For Erasmus, the most important factor in determining canonicity was undoubtedly the unanimous acceptance of a book by the church. This is strongly suggested by the following statement in his critique of the Apocalypse:

These arguments would move me somewhat to disbelieve that the work belongs to John the evangelist, unless the general consent of the world, particularly the authority of the church, called me to another conclusion, namely, that the church approves of this work with the understanding that she wishes it to be considered the work of John the evangelist and to be held of equal weight with the other canonical books.³⁴

Erasmus' dependence on this criterion was to become more evident in a few years.

But did Erasmus contest the canonical status of the antilegomena?

³²Leipoldt, p. 18. On pp. 19-21, Leipoldt has reprinted the relevant passages from Erasmus and italicized the phrases taken directly or indirectly from Jerome.

³³Novum Instrumentum, p. 522; LB, VI, 831.

³⁴Ibid., p. 625; LB, VI, 1123.

The answer is not immediately apparent. In his Annotationes to the 1516 New Testament, where the above criticisms first appeared, Erasmus was very careful not to impugn the authority of the questioned books, with the possible exception of the Apocalypse. Hebrews and James, for example, he clearly regarded very highly, even though their authorship was in doubt.³⁵ His remarks on the Apocalypse, however, suggest that he attributed less authority to it:

I observe that ancient theologians quote passages from this book more for illustration and ornament than for the support of a serious proposition. Just as there is some difference among jewels, and some gold is purer and better than others, so also in sacred things it follows that one thing is more sacred than another. He who is spiritual, as Paul says, judges all things, and is judged by no one.³⁶

Erasmus has not condemned the book, but merely suggested that he and other spiritual men should distinguish this book from others of greater value. He adds that he sometimes felt that the work was written by Cerinthus, but could not bring himself to believe that God would permit such a ruse of the devil to continue for so many years. He continues, "This book is of no value for proving anything, since it contains only allegories. But it is of much help for learning the origins of the church."³⁷ Significantly, the book of Revelation is the only book of the New Testament for which Erasmus did not prepare a paraphrase.³⁸

³⁵With regard to Hebrews, he writes: "Optime lector, nihilo minoris velim esse tibi hanc epistolam, quod a multis dubitatum sit Pauli esset an alterius," Novum Instrumentum, p. 600; LB, VI, 1023. He concludes his remarks on James with the words, "Epistolam probo et amplector," Novum Instrumentum, p. 606; LB, VI, 1038.

³⁶Novum Instrumentum, p. 625; LB, VI, 1123. Cf. IX, 867.

³⁷LB, VI, 1126. This comment is not in the first edition.

³⁸Aldridge, p. 81.

Erasmus' position on the canonical status of the questioned books became clearer in a few years. Almost immediately, Lefèvre challenged Erasmus' opinion about the authorship of Hebrews. His arguments against Erasmus betrayed his limited knowledge of the early history of the church. He maintained, for example, that the Pauline authorship of Hebrews was questioned in the ancient church only by heretics, and repeated the familiar argument that Paul had written it in Hebrew and someone else had translated it into Greek. It was therefore a rather simple matter for the learned Erasmus to answer this challenge. Nevertheless, his answer to Lefèvre reveals that he had learned how unsafe it was to criticize any writings of the New Testament, for his defense is couched in more cautious language than his notes of the previous year, with one important exception: he now maintains that if the critics of Hebrews were correct, the book would indeed have less authority.³⁹ This statement, however, appears to be a careless contradiction to the rest of his reply, for he asserts "It is possible that it may not be Pauline and yet be better than the Pauline writings."⁴⁰ Moreover, in this defense, Erasmus emphasized that his historical and critical investigations were of insufficient weight to count against the authority of the church. He informs Lefèvre: "Truly if the church judged it to be Pauline and commanded us to believe it, I would believe and claim that it is Paul's."⁴¹

³⁹"Quod si esset dubitatum et merito dubitatum, certe levius torqueret nos eius auctoritas," LB, IX, 53-54. Erasmus' reply is dated August 5, 1517.

⁴⁰"Fieri potest ut Paulina non sit et tamen Paulinis etiam melior," LB, IX, 54.

⁴¹"Si vere iudicavit [ecclesia] hanc esse Pauli atque ita nos jubet credere, credo et clamo esse Pauli," *ibid.*, col. 54.

In succeeding years, Erasmus became even more cautious, for Luther had appeared on the scene and the church appeared to be less tolerant of criticism. In the third edition of his New Testament (1522) he returned the comma Iohanneum to the text of I John "in order to give no one an occasion for offense."⁴² Erasmus' chief criticism came from the important theological faculty of the University of Paris, who in 1527 censured him for his critical views. This censure is significant, not only because of its effect on Erasmus, but as a reflection of learned Catholic thought on the subject of the canon at that time.

The censure began by affirming that the doubts of the early church on the authenticity of certain New Testament books had long since come to an end. Because the church had received and defined the canonical books, "it is now unlawful for a Christian to have doubts concerning them or to call them into question again."⁴³ The censure singles out particularly Erasmus' remarks on Hebrews, II Peter, and the Apocalypse. His statements on Hebrews are described as "arrogant and schismatic," for they had been asserted "contrary to the use and judgment of the church in many councils." The censure continues: "All catholic teachers, popes, and councils declare that this epistle is Paul's, and the use and consensus of the universal church agrees; but this writer, wiser than the whole world, casts doubts on this."⁴⁴ Likewise, II Peter was written by the apostle, for it had been received as such by the church and declared to be

⁴²Cited by Leipoldt, p. 26. Cf. also supra, p. 63, n. 15.

⁴³"postquam Ecclesia sub nomine talium autorum suo usu universali illos recepit et sua probavit definitione, iam non fas est Christiano de illis dubitare aut in dubium revocare," LB, IX, 863.

⁴⁴Ibid., col. 865.

Petrine by various councils and popes. Furthermore, the author was with Jesus at His transfiguration; since neither James nor John could have written it, it must have been written by Peter, and no one may doubt this any longer.⁴⁵ The book of Revelation was written by the apostle John, as is evident "both from its use in the church, and from its definition in councils."⁴⁶ Erasmus' criticism is thus opposed to the decisions of church councils and many holy fathers.

That the Paris theologians should single out these three writings is understandable. Erasmus had dealt at greatest length and most severely with Hebrews and Revelation, and the literary deposit of the prince of the apostles was slim enough without having to endure further shrinkage. The Paris appeal to ecclesiastical usage and authority for determining the canonicity of books was in keeping with the traditional viewpoint of the church. Erasmus was in a difficult situation. His scholarly reputation would suffer if he surrendered his prior criticism, but his status in the church might be threatened if he insisted on the right to his opinions. His reply was skillfully, if somewhat ambiguously, written. The chief author of Holy Scripture, he asserts, is the Holy Spirit, and he had never questioned that basic fact. Although he had questioned the human authorship of certain books, it was clear that he still regarded them as canonical. Furthermore, the names assigned to many biblical writings were relatively unimportant. David did not write all of the Psalms, and other book titles, such as Job, Jeremiah, and Tobit, do not

⁴⁵Ibid., col. 866.

⁴⁶"Tum ex ecclesia usu, tum ex eiusdem definitione in conciliis," ibid., col. 867.

denote authorship. He reminds the Paris theologians that such a great theologian as Thomas Aquinas had questioned the authorship of certain books without on that account being regarded as heretical.⁴⁷ But he does not press his case, insisting more strenuously than ever that he is willing to submit to the judgment of the church in all things:

If the universal church receives the titles in such a way that it regards as unbelievers those who have doubts about the human author, I will hasten with hands and feet to accept that opinion and take my intellect captive in the obedience of faith. According to human judgment, I do not believe that the epistle to the Hebrews is Pauline or Lucan, nor that II Peter is Petrine, nor that the Apocalypse is by the apostle John who wrote the Gospel. I am able to support this with many arguments, but it is preferable to avoid offending the weak. For the expressed judgment of the church has more authority for me than any human arguments.⁴⁸

It is therefore clear that Erasmus neither denied the canonicity of the questioned books nor the authority of the church to render canonical judgments.

As a New Testament scholar Erasmus did not deal with the Old Testament canon to any great extent. Nevertheless, his writings give clear indications of his opinion. In notes added to his edition of Jerome's works, which began to appear in 1516, he expressed critical judgments on some of the deuterocanonical books. He marvels that Jerome included third and fourth Esdras among the apocrypha and suggests that this may explain why they are now read indiscriminately. He wonders why Tobit is regarded as one of the chief writings, since the book has no status among

⁴⁷Ibid., col. 866. He mentions also that his contemporary, the prominent Cardinal Cajetan, cites this epistle without referring to it as Paul's, and asks rhetorically: "Si non dubitabat de auctore, quid opus erat illa periphrasi?"

⁴⁸" . . . Nam plus apud me valet expressum ecclesiae iudicium, quam ullae rationes humanae," ibid., col. 864.

the Jews and Jerome had clearly placed it among the apocrypha. With regard to Jerome's use of symbols to distinguish between the canonical text of Daniel and its Greek additions, Erasmus observes that the "custom of the multitude of unlearned people has had more weight than the judgment of a learned man." The result, Erasmus chides, is that the narrative of Bel and the Dragon, which Jerome called a fable, is read among us without discrimination. He laments that Jerome has authority only where his views suit the present age.⁴⁹ In a preface to volume four of the 1525 edition of Jerome, Erasmus stated that it is not quite clear what authority is enjoyed by the deuterocanonical books now "in public use" in the church, "books which the ancient fathers with great consensus numbered among the apocrypha." To be sure, he continues, "we will embrace as worthy of Christian use whatever the authority of the church approves." But, he asserts, "The spirit in which the church approves something certainly makes a great deal of difference. For she would certainly not give the same authority and weight to Judith, Tobit, and the Wisdom books that she gives to the books of the Hebrews, the four Gospels, or the Pentateuch of Moses."⁵⁰

In his 1533 explanation to the Apostles' Creed and Decalogue, Erasmus listed the twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament as books whose authority no one may doubt. He noted that other books in the Vulgate "have been received into ecclesiastical use," and adds the enigmatic comment: "The Holy Spirit knows whether the church receives these books with the same authority as it does the others." He observes

⁴⁹The relevant passages from Erasmus' prefaces to Jerome's works are cited by Hody, p. 661, col. 120.

⁵⁰Hody, ibid.

incorrectly that the Jews allowed their hagiographa to be read, but did not assign them great authority in weighty matters. After asserting that apocryphal writings might be read privately, but not in public assemblies, he cautions the reader that not everything read in the church is canonical Scripture. Erasmus pleads (without adducing the list of books from Carthage): "Would that we observed the decree of the Council of Carthage and did not permit anything to be read publicly in the churches except canonical writings!"⁵¹

That Erasmus distinguished between the relative value and authority of the biblical books is clear. Later in life he could affirm that the primary works of the New Testament were the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline epistles, I Peter and I John.⁵² In his Ratio, the hierarchy within Scripture is also apparent. There he advises that Isaiah is more worthy than Esther or Judith, the Gospel of Matthew more useful than the Apocalypse attributed to John, and the epistles of Paul to the Romans and Corinthians more valuable than Hebrews.⁵³ Such distinctions were as much pastoral as canonical, however, for their purpose was to aid the reader in studying those Scriptures which teach the "philosophy of Christ" most clearly.⁵⁴

⁵¹LB, V, 1173.

⁵²Ibid., V, 1049.

⁵³Ibid., V, 92.

⁵⁴For the relationship between Erasmus' exegetical principles and his philosophia Christi, see Aldridge, especially pp. 38-56. For an excellent discussion of this philosophy, see Spitz, pp. 197-236. Leipoldt, p. 30, explains that Erasmus held that "nur Christus dürfe in der Schrift gesucht werden," but points out that Erasmus saw in Christ primarily "den Lehrer und das Tugendvorbild."

The contributions of Erasmus to the history of the canon were considerable. His methodology was to be followed with varying degrees of success, not only by many of his contemporaries, but by generations yet unborn. His willingness to heed the answer of the church to the questions he had raised typified the attitude that was to become official a few years later at the Council of Trent.

Karlstadt

Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt was not a humanist, but a theologian of the "old way."⁵⁵ A Thomist, Karlstadt had come under the influence of his junior colleague on the faculty of the University of Wittenberg, Martin Luther. In 1519, he preceded Luther in the famous disputation with John Eck at Leipzig. On August 18, 1520, he published the only treatise on the canon to be written by the early reformers.⁵⁶ Although

⁵⁵On the affinity between the theology of the "old way" and humanism, see Leipoldt, p. 33. Leipoldt states: "Beide wollten zu den Quellen des Wissens zurückkehren, auch zu den Quellen der ältesten Kirchengeschichte. Beide boten alle Mittel sprachlicher Gelehrsamkeit auf, um dies Quellen zu ergründen. So mussten sie auch beide einander befruchten."

⁵⁶De Canonicis Scripturis Libellus D. Andreae Bodenstein Carolstadii Sacrae Theologiae Doctoris et Archidiaconi Wittenbergensis (Wittenbergae: Ioannes Viridi Montanus, 1520).

A slightly imperfect text, together with an introduction and notes, is available in Karl August Credner, Zur Geschichte des Kanons (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1847), pp. 291-412.

Karlstadt's position on the canon is not well known, although brief references to it occur in several standard encyclopedia articles and works on the canon. Leipoldt's treatment, pp. 104-120, is the most extensive, and includes lengthy citations of the original text; it does not, however, discuss Karlstadt's views on the Old Testament canon. Large sections of Karlstadt's work, with very little useful expository material, are cited by Henry Howorth, "The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon according to the Continental Reformers. I. Luther and Karlstadt," The Journal of Theological Studies, VIII (1907), 321-365. Our discussion of Karlstadt differs from the foregoing by including an analysis of his position on the Old Testament canon and by dealing with his criteria of canonicity in

Karlstadt had planned his book before Luther's attitude toward the canon became known, his treatment of the canon is in part a reaction against Luther. But the main target of his attack is the Roman Catholic Church, against whose claims to authority Karlstadt opposes the sole authority of Holy Scripture. In this work and a German condensation published a few months later,⁵⁷ Karlstadt reveals the humanistic influence of Erasmus by employing historical methodology to establish the biblical canon.

In the first two parts of his De canonicis, Karlstadt set forth in detail his arguments for the majesty, force, and sole authority of Holy Scripture above the fathers, popes, councils, and human tradition. Having placed the Bible at the very source of all authority in theological discussion, he proceeds in part three to discuss the number and order of the several biblical books. His initial postulate of Old Testament canonicity follows St. Jerome: "Among the Jews was preserved the canon in which are contained the canonical books to which we owe unquestioning faith."⁵⁸ The term "apocrypha," meaning "occult or hidden," applies to books "of whose authors we are ignorant and which the consensus of men has removed from the family of books. For books receive their authority either from

greater detail.

Still useful for biographical data and summaries of Karlstadt's writings is Hermann Barge, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1905), two volumes. See especially I, 186-200.

⁵⁷Welche bücher heilig und Biblisch seind. Diss büchlin leret underscheid zwüschen Biblischen büchern und unbiblischen darinnen viel geirret haben und noch irren. Darzu Weiset das büchlin welche bücher in der Biblien erstlich seind zu lesen (Wittenberg: 1521). Microfilm copy of volume in Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. (St. Louis: Foundation for Reformation Research, 1960).

⁵⁸"Apud Hebraeos quidam conservabatur Canon, in quo canonici libri habebantur, quibus indubitata fidem debemus," De canonicis, p. D 4b.

their authors or from use." He thus finds fault with Jerome's dictum that a book is apocryphal for the sole reason that its author is unknown, "for use and antiquity can approve an epistle of uncertain authorship."⁵⁹

Karlstadt next analyzes and criticizes the catalogues of both Jerome and Augustine. Augustine was too uncritical about books not in the Hebrew canon, Karlstadt asserts. With regard to Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, for example, the Western church has followed Augustine in attributing such eminence to these books as is due only to the canonical books; for "if Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus have not yet been accepted by the Eastern church, they are not catholic, that is, they are not universally accepted by all churches."⁶⁰ While Augustine erred in assigning too much authority to certain books, Jerome wavers between recognizing limited authority in the additional books and rejecting them altogether. Against Jerome's emphasis on authorship, Karlstadt demonstrates that many acknowledged biblical books are of uncertain authorship, including the Pentateuch.⁶¹

Finally, having discarded the theories of Jerome and Augustine with regard to individual books, Karlstadt sets up his own canonical list, in which he distinguishes three orders or classes of books in each Testament. The first and most important class contains the Pentateuch of Moses and the four Gospels. To the second class belong the Prophets and the fifteen

⁵⁹"Igitur Epistolam incerti autoris et usus et vetustas approbare potest, tametsi ignoratur eius autor," *ibid.*, p. E 1b.

⁶⁰"Porro si Sapientia et Ecclesiasticus nondum ab orientali Ecclesia sunt recepti, non sunt Catholici, id est non sunt universales, ab omnibus scilicet ecclesiis accepti," *ibid.*, p. E 4b.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. G 1-3. His argumentation against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is strikingly similar in principle to that employed by modern historical criticism.

epistles universally received and undoubtedly apostolic. In the third order are the hagiographa of the Old Testament and the antilegomena of the New Testament. Karlstadt's tripartite division was evidently intended to denote distinctions of authority, for he describes the third class as "the third and lowest place of divine authority."⁶² Significantly, the sole basis of classification is the amount of attestation that the various books enjoyed. New Testament books of the second class had their "apostolic and divine authority from apostolic times," while Hebrews and the Apocalypse first merited "sacred authority many years after the death of the apostles, particularly among the Romans."⁶³

Karlstadt divides the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament into two classes. The first class, which includes Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit, and two books of Maccabees, is described thus: "These are apocrypha, that is, outside the canon of the Jews, but nevertheless hagiographa."⁶⁴ The second class, consisting of III and IV Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the additions to Daniel, bears this description: "These are completely apocryphal, to be censured by the critics."⁶⁵ For Karlstadt, books in both categories were clearly outside the canon, yet some had greater

⁶²"In tertium et infimum auctoritatis divinae locum," *ibid.*, p. M 4b. Note that Karlstadt nevertheless speaks of their "divine authority." He also observes, somewhat ambiguously, that he does not regard such books as inferior, but has classified them thus because "de eius autore dubitatur."

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴"Hi sunt apocryphi, id est extra canonem hebraeorum, tamen agiographi," *ibid.*, p. K 2a.

⁶⁵"Hi sunt plane apocryphi, virgis censoriis animadvertendi," *ibid.* The "virga censoria" was a critic's mark usually called an "obelus." Note the similarity between Karlstadt's apocryphal distinctions and those of the 1498 Basel Bible, *supra*, pp. 59-60.

usefulness than others.

Karlstadt's comments on the books in the third order of the New Testament, the antilegomena, are also instructive. His remarks on James betray a great deal of personal animosity toward Luther.⁶⁶ He acknowledges that the author of James is uncertain, yet maintains the canonicity of the epistle. He contends that apostolic authorship is not crucial for canonicity, and cites as an example the Gospel of Mark, which is uncontested even though it may not be apostolic in the strict sense.⁶⁷ On the other hand, the ending of Mark's Gospel, not found in the best manuscripts, is apocryphal.⁶⁸ With regard to Luther's assertion that James contradicts Paul on faith and works, Karlstadt affirms that it is better to reinterpret difficult passages than to sit in judgment upon them.⁶⁹

The Petrine authorship of II Peter has also been challenged, Karlstadt admits, but with insufficient reason, for its authority remains uncontested.⁷⁰ The second and third epistles of John were no doubt written by the presbyter rather than the apostle. But they enjoy full canonical

⁶⁶He suggests that Luther's attitude toward James stems from his dislike of Karlstadt! The latter had been offering a course on James, and felt that Luther's criticism of James was designed to keep students from his course. He suggests that Luther would have challenged the canonicity of Matthew had Karlstadt been offering a course on that book, *ibid.*, pp. H 2a-b. Karlstadt's comments on Luther are absent in the popular German version.

⁶⁷Karlstadt understands apostolicity in a broad sense, agreeing with Papias "non solum quid Apostoli, sed etiam quid discipuli emiserant," *ibid.*, p. L 2b.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp. L 1a-b.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, pp. M 1a-b.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. M 3a.

authority, for already Papias gave the presbyter and other disciples of the apostles the honor of authority.⁷¹ Jude was challenged in the early church because he cites an apocryphal writing, but this is an insufficient basis for rejection. The author of Chronicles and the apostle Paul in Romans follow the same practice.⁷² Karlstadt quotes Erasmus' criticism of Hebrews with approval, but repeats his frequent assertion that doubt about authorship is in itself not grounds for denying its authority.⁷³ On the Apocalypse, Karlstadt repeats some of the comments of Erasmus, but without questioning the book's canonicity.⁷⁴

Karlstadt's discussion of the New Testament antilegomena reveals two important aspects of his criteriology. Negatively, he refused to deny a book's canonicity because of uncertain authorship. Positively, he placed great stress on the role of the church as a criterion of canonicity. Objecting to Jerome's definition of "apocrypha," Karlstadt asserts: "The lack of certainty about authorship does not make writings apocryphal, nor does certain authorship make writings canonical; only a canon makes books apocryphal, whether or not they have authors and names."⁷⁵ His

⁷¹Ibid., pp. L 2a-b.

⁷²Ibid., p. M 3b.

⁷³Ibid., pp. L 4a-b.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. M 3b-4a. In his German edition, Karlstadt states, p. B 3b: "Doch ist zuwissen, das unter alle büchern die dritte ordnung, Apocalipsis Johannis das geringst ist, ursach, das in zeytten Hieronymi und darnach vil Christen, dasselb buch noch nit angenommen." See also p. C 2b, where Karlstadt says: the book of Revelation "kann ichs schwerlich zu Biblische schriften setzen."

In the German edition Karlstadt also speaks of New Testament apocryphal writings. Included in this category are the last chapter of Mark and the epistle to the Laodiceans. With regard to the latter, Karlstadt notes: "Die Epistel die man Pauli achtet, ist gar vorworffen," p. C 3a.

⁷⁵"Constat incertitudinem auctoris non facere apocrypha scripta, nec certum auctorum reddere canonicas scripturas, sed quod solus canon libros

point is that a canon involves a decision about different books; books are not automatically canonical or extra-canonical. And Karlstadt does not hesitate to assert that the church makes that decision. In a heated polemical section, ostensibly addressed to his students, but obviously aimed at Luther's attitude toward James, Karlstadt asks in nervous Latin: "If you permit the Jews to approve which books are to be received as canonical, why do you refuse to give that same right to the churches of Christ, since the church is not less than the synagog?"⁷⁶ In a sense, he agrees with the dictum of Augustine, "I would not believe the Gospel,^a if I did not believe the church." Karlstadt explains: "The meaning of this assertion is that in the reception of books, we learn from the witness of the church which books are evangelical and which books lack evangelical majesty, and similarly which books are apostolic epistles."⁷⁷ Karlstadt is not conceding to the present church the authority to limit or expand its canon, something he had vigorously denied throughout the first two parts of his book. In humanistic fashion, he is rather appealing to the usage and judgment of the earliest church.

The humanistic nature of Karlstadt's treatment of the canon can be seen most clearly in the rationale for his tripartite classification. Books are distinguished, not on the basis of their intrinsic worth or

apocryphos facit, sive habeant autores et nomina sive non," De canonicis, pp. G 1a-b.

⁷⁶"Postreme, si Iudaeis permittitis, quod, in recipiendo, libros comprobarunt, cur tantundem iuris recusatis ecclesiis Christi dare, quando Ecclesia non sit minor quam synagoga?" Ibid., p. H 2b.

⁷⁷"Cuius sensus est, quod receptione librorum, scimus aliquot esse Evangelicos, et aliquot ab Evangelica maiestate abhorreere, ita similiter Ecclesia testante didicimus, quot et quae sint Apostolicae epistolae," ibid., pp. M 4b-N 1a.

the authoritative judgment of the church, but on the historical basis of their acceptance by the church. Karlstadt's theories on the canon apparently exerted little direct influence in his own time.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, in its employment of history, literary criticism, and the role of the church as criteria of canonicity, as well as in its refusal to confuse authorship and canonicity, Karlstadt's treatment can be seen as the forerunner of modern historical criticism and the precursor of views that were to be heard again in his own century.

Cajetan

Cardinal Thomas de Vio Cajetan, one of the outstanding theological scholars of the early sixteenth century, is familiar to many as the prince of commentators on the Summa of St. Thomas. Many others remember him as the papal legate in discussions with Luther at Augsburg in 1518. His exegetical work is less well known, even though he devoted himself almost exclusively to biblical studies during the last ten years of his life. His exegetical works produced between 1524 and 1534 were based on the original languages of Holy Scripture and included commentaries on all the books of the Old Testament up to and including the third chapter

⁷⁸Credner, pp. 294-295, states that he has found no reference to this book in the writings of the other reformers. This judgment is shared by Leipoldt, p. 118, and Berger, p. 96. Leipoldt, p. 96, suggests that Karlstadt's work may have had some influence on the 1522 Vulgate edition of Andreas Osiander.

Osiander's 1522 Latin edition was the first complete Bible published by the reformers. It professed to correct the Vulgate text on the basis of the original texts. The regular Vulgate order is followed and Jerome's prefaces are included. In addition, a comment such as "non est canonica" or "non est in hebraeo" or "inter Apocrypha computat" is added to each of the disputed books of the Old Testament. The edition also includes a translation of Athanasius' comments on the biblical books. See Howorth, pp. 350-352.

of Isaiah, and on all the books of the New Testament except the Apocalypse. Impressed with the superior biblical knowledge of the Reformers, Cajetan wrote his commentaries to give Roman Catholics a firm biblical basis for the defense of their faith.⁷⁹ The title of his first commentary reveals two of his most fundamental tenets: he describes his work on the Psalms as "corrected according to the Hebrew verity" and "explained according to the literal sense."⁸⁰ His allegiance to the "Hebrew verity," as learned from Jerome, influenced his theory of canonicity for the Old Testament. His insistence on literal interpretation explains why he failed to write commentaries on the Apocalypse and Canticles.⁸¹ The influence of humanism on his methodology is also apparent in his treatment of the canon.⁸²

⁷⁹J. F. Groner, Kardinal Cajetan, Eine Gestalt aus der Reformationszeit (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, 1951), pp. 24-25. Groner's work contains a list of Cajetan's works, pp. 66-73; a Cajetan bibliography, pp. 74-78; and much useful biographical information.

⁸⁰The full title of this work is: Psalmi Davidici ad Hebraicam veritatem castigati et iuxta sensum quem litteralem vocant enarrati.

⁸¹Cajetan's exegetical works have been collected and published as Opera Omnia quotquot in Sacrae Scripturae expositionem reperuntur, cura atque industria insignis Collegii S. Thomae Complutensis O.P. (Lugduni: 1639), V tomi. We have used a microfilm copy of the edition found in the Columbia University Library. The microfilm was acquired from the Foundation on Reformation Research, St. Louis, Mo.

With regard to the book of Canticles, Cajetan states: "Canticum Canticorum juxta germanum sensum fateor me non intelligere," III, 633. With regard to the Apocalypse, he writes: "Apocalypsim enim fateor me nescire exponere iuxta sensum litteralem: exponat cui Deus concesserit," V, 401.

In spite of his insistence on the literal sense, Cajetan did not hesitate to offer a figurative interpretation when he felt the text and context demanded it. In his commentary on Genesis, for example, he regarded the story of Eve's formation from Adam's rib and the account of the serpent's temptation to be parabolic, I, 20 and 25.

⁸²For useful discussions of Cajetan's exegetical methodology see the following: Thomas Aquinas Collins, "Cardinal Cajetan's Fundamental

That he followed Jerome in regarding the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament as non-canonical is evidenced both by his failure to write commentaries on these books and by his explicit statements. In the conclusion to his commentary on Esther, he states:

At this point we end our commentary on the historical books of the Old Testament, for the remaining books in this category (namely, Judith, Tobit, and the Maccabean books) are regarded by St. Jerome as being outside the canonical books and placed among the apocryphal writings, as is evident in his Prologus Galeatus.⁸³

At the end of his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Cajetan writes similarly:

"We have deemed it best to hasten on to the oracles of the prophets and omit the remaining Wisdom books, since Jerome considers them to be outside of the canonical books used for the authority of faith."⁸⁴

Cajetan nevertheless regarded the Septuagint additions as canonical,

Biblical Principles," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XVII (1955), 363-378; P. A. Vaccari, "Cardinalis Caietanus: Sacrarum Litterarum Studiosus," Verbum Domini, XIV (1934), 321-327; Albert Colunga, "El Cardenal Cayetano y los Problemas de Introducci3n B3blica," La Ciencia Tomista, XVIII (1918), 21-32, and XX (1919), 43-50; J. M. Vost3, "Cardinalis Caietanus Sacrae Scripturae Interpres," Angelicum, XI (1934), 445-531; and A. Allgeier, "Les Commentaires de Caj3tan sur les Psaumes," Revue Thomiste, XXXIX (1934), 410-443. Of limited usefulness is the older study of Robert C. Jenkins, Pre-Tridentine Doctrine: A Review of the Commentary on the Scriptures of Thomas de Vio, Cardinal of St. Xystus, Commonly Called Cardinal Cajetan (London: David Nutt, 1891), especially pp. 94-96 and 103-106.

Of the foregoing, Colunga, pp. 26-30, and Vost3, pp. 450-458, give a brief account of Cajetan's position on the canon. In the standard works on the canon, Cajetan's position has not generally received detailed examination. An exception is Leipoldt, pp. 33-42, whose exposition of Cajetan's position is more positive than that of Colunga and Vost3. Our own treatment expands that of Leipoldt in three ways: by dealing with Cajetan's views on the Old Testament canon, analyzing the censure of the Paris theologians and Cajetan's reply more carefully, and giving more attention to his cri-teriology.

⁸³Opera, II, 400.

⁸⁴Ibid., III, 633.

but in a restricted sense. He states that these books "are not canonical, that is, they are not normative for confirming those things which are of faith. Nevertheless, they can be called canonical, that is, normative for the edification of the faithful."⁸⁵ This concept of a double canon is important for Cajetan. "With this distinction," he tells his readers, "you will be able to understand what Augustine wrote in his second book on Christian doctrine, what was decreed in the Council of Florence under Eugenius IV and in the provincial councils of Carthage and Laodicea, and the statements of Popes Innocent and Gelasius."⁸⁶ By employing this distinction, Cajetan was able to reconcile his own articulation of the more critical Hieronymian theory with the less critical Augustinian practice that claimed the support of popes and councils.

Cajetan's many statements on the canon leave no doubt that his primary authority was St. Jerome. He gives this advice about the deuterocanonical books:

Do not be disturbed, dear novice, if you find some of those books counted among the canonical books, either in sacred councils or by sacred teachers. For, whether they are words of councils or of teachers, they are to be led back to the judgment of Jerome.⁸⁷

He writes similarly in his dedicatory epistle to Pope Clement VII prefixed to his commentaries on the historical books of the Old Testament:

Blessed Father, the universal Latin church owes much to St. Jerome, not only on account of his comments on the descriptive and doubtful

⁸⁵"Non sunt canonici, id est, non sunt regulares ad firmandum ea quae sunt fidei; possunt tamen dici canonici, id est, regulares ad aedificationem fidelium, utpote in canone Bibliorum ad hoc recepti et auctorati," *ibid.*, II, 400.

⁸⁶"Cum hac enim distinctione discernere poteris, et dicta Augustini in secundo de Doctrina Christiana, et scripta in concilio Florentino sub Eugenio IV, scriptaque in provincialibus, conciliis Carthaginensi et Laodicensi, et ab Innocentio et Gelasio pontificibus," *ibid.*, II, 400.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

portions in the books of the Old and New Testaments, but also on account of his distinctions between canonical and non-canonical books. For he indeed has freed us from the reproach of the Jews that we have added to our ancient canon books or parts of books which are completely lacking in their own.⁸⁸

He acknowledges the authority of Jerome even more explicitly in his preface to Hebrews: "Since we have chosen Jerome as our rule, we will not err in judging the canonical books. For, those which he taught were canonical, we hold as canonical; and those which he distinguished from the canonical books, we hold to be outside the canon."⁸⁹

Jerome's comments count heavily in Cajetan's judgments on New Testament books or sections as well, but occasionally the influence of Erasmus is also evident. With regard to the ending of Mark's Gospel, Cajetan recognizes its truth, but holds that it is not "of such solid authority for strengthening faith as are the other unquestioned sections of Mark."⁹⁰ Quoting Jerome's statement that the story of the adulterous woman in the eighth chapter of John is not to be found in many Greek and Latin manuscripts, Cajetan concludes that this story is not authentic.⁹¹ Like Erasmus, he is extremely doubtful of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. Unlike Erasmus, however, he concludes that "unless it is Pauline, it is not clear that it is canonical." On that account, no doubtful aspect of

⁸⁸"... propter discretos ab eodem libros canonicos a non canonicos. Liberavit siquidem nos ab Hebraeorum opprobrio, quod fingamus nobis antiqui canonis libros aut librorum partes, quibus ipsi penitus carent," cited by Vosté, pp. 450-451. This preface was not included in the Opera Omnia.

⁸⁹"Quoniam Hieronymum sortiti sumus regulam ne erremus in discretione librorum canonicorum, nam quos ille canonicos tradidit, canonicos habemus; et quos ille a canonicis discrevit, extra canonem habemus," Opera, V, 329.

⁹⁰Ibid., IV, 168.

⁹¹Ibid., IV, 345.

the faith may be decided "on the authority of this epistle alone." That this was a painful conclusion for Cajetan is evident from his interjection: "See how much evil is caused by a book without the name of its author!"⁹²

His judgment on II and III John is again based on the authority of Jerome, who designated John the presbyter as their author on the basis of the testimony of Papias. Cajetan concludes that both are "of lesser authority."⁹³ The epistle of Jude is likewise "of lesser authority than those Holy Scriptures which are certain." Cajetan explains that the problem as such is not that Jude cites an apocryphal writing, but that it is quoted "simply and absolutely as prophecy."⁹⁴ With regard to James, Cajetan simply repeats the doubts expressed by Jerome, but notes as well that the style of the salutation differs from that normally employed by the apostles.⁹⁵

Cajetan's criticism of Hebrews, James, II and III John, and Jude is more severe than that of Erasmus, but the same cannot be said about the Apocalypse and II Peter. Concerning the former, Cajetan notes only that he is unable to interpret it according to the literal sense, but he does not explicitly challenge its authority.⁹⁶ Nor did he question the canonicity of II Peter. He knew from Jerome that this letter had not yet gained

⁹²"...quoniam nisi sit Pauli, non perspicuum est canonicam esse. Quo fit ut ex sola huius epistolae auctoritate non possit, si quod dubium in fide accideret, determinari. Ecce quantum parit malum liber sine auctoris titulo," ibid., V, 329.

⁹³"Et propterea ambae minoris auctoritatis sunt," ibid., V, 398.

⁹⁴"ut apocrypha prophetia ut simpliciter et absolute prophetia inducatur," ibid., V, 401.

⁹⁵Ibid., V, 362.

⁹⁶Supra, p. 86, n. 81.

general acceptance in the fourth century. He also realized that the chief reason for this, according to Jerome and Erasmus, was the stylistic difference between the two Petrine epistles. But Cajetan does not accept this as a valid argument. He argues: if stylistic differences indicate different authors, then both epistles of Peter are uncertain, and it is impossible to determine which one represents the true Petrine style. He notes that the letters of Gregory the Great are stylistically quite different from his other writings, but that no one questions their authenticity.⁹⁷ This interesting argument is puzzling, for with similar logic he could have championed the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. Perhaps his own strong convictions of Petrine primacy⁹⁸ or the Paris theologians' criticisms of Erasmus had convinced him that the authorship of this epistle should not be challenged.

While the information provided by Jerome was a major factor in Cajetan's criticism, it should be noted that other factors also played an important role. In his argumentation against the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, Cajetan observes with disapproval that the epistle employs allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament in various places, thus violating the important principle of literal interpretation. Furthermore, on the basis of Hebrews 2:3 it is clear that the author did not receive the Gospel from Jesus, but from his disciples; this conflicts with what Paul says of himself in Galatians. Cajetan examines some of the terminology of the

⁹⁷Opera, V, 381.

⁹⁸Cajetan's convictions on the primacy of the Roman bishop were best expressed in his De divina Institutione Pontificatus Romani Pontificis of 1521. The critical edition of this work is that of Fr. Lauchert in Corpus Catholicorum, X (Münster: Aschendorff, 1925).

epistle to show that it could not first have been written in Hebrew, then translated into Greek. In short, Cajetan employs a form of literary criticism to vindicate his opinion of the epistle.⁹⁹ He uses a similar technique with James when he notes that the salutation of the epistle differs from the usual apostolic greeting, for it contains "nothing of God, nothing of Jesus Christ, nothing of grace, and nothing of peace."¹⁰⁰

Significantly, Cajetan placed greater emphasis on the necessity of known prophetic and apostolic authorship than had either Erasmus or Karlstadt. He clearly enunciates this principle in his comments on I Cor. 12:28:

He [Paul] explains that the apostles are the supreme members [of the church]. For the government of the universal church looks to them not only for word and action, but also for Scripture. From this it follows that only what is written by the apostles, or approved by them, has the authority of Sacred Scripture.¹⁰¹

In a similar vein, Cajetan discusses the authorship of Job:

It is rationally believed that Moses is the author of this book. Since this book does not deal with deeds done by or among the Israelites, and does not teach the doctrine of any Israelite prophet (regardless of who the author of this book is), the question arises: "Who canonized this book among the people of Israel?" For it is clear that the Jews count this book among the canonical books. But if Moses is believed to be the author of this book, the question of how this book was inserted among the canonical books of the Jews is superfluous. For it became canonical from the fact that Moses wrote it, just as whatever the apostles wrote is canonical among Christians.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Opera, V, 329.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., V, 362.

¹⁰¹"...Unde sola scripta ab Apostolis (seu ab eis approbata) sacra Scripturae auctoritatem habent," ibid., V, 130.

¹⁰²"...ex eo enim quod Moyses scripsit illum, canonicus fuit; quemadmodum quidquid scripserunt Apostoli, canonicum apud Christianos est," ibid., II, 401.

Applied strictly, Cajetan's principle would mean that no anonymous writing could be received as canonical. This is in fact what he clearly states in his commentary on Proverbs. After noting that the Pentateuch, Job, the Psalter and other historical books written before Solomon's time fail to give the author's name at the beginning of each book, he remarks that the later prophets follow the laudable example of Solomon and attach their own names. This practice confers something to the authority of a book, he observes, for "books lacking a certain author are reckoned by the church among the apocrypha."¹⁰³ With this insistence on the certainty of prophetic and apostolic authorship or approval, it is understandable that Cajetan should maintain that if Hebrews were not Pauline, it would not clearly be canonical.¹⁰⁴

Cajetan's appeal to Jerome as the prime authority for the tradition of the early church and the canonicity of the Old Testament was not convincing to many of his contemporaries. For there had been other revered voices in the church's past who apparently knew nothing of certain biblical writings possessing less authority than others. In their faculty session of June 8, 1532, the masters of the theological faculty of Paris were informed by their president that complaints had been filed with them concerning certain doctrines found in Cajetan's exegetical works. A committee of five was assigned the task of drawing up a list of his supposedly erroneous propositions, and two others were charged with stopping the sale of his challenged works until a decision had been reached on their

¹⁰³"Confert siquidem hoc ad auctoritatem libri, in cuius signum libri carentes certo auctore, supputantur ab Ecclesia inter apocrypha," ibid., III, 505.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., V, 329.

orthodoxy.¹⁰⁵ The affair came to the attention of Pope Clement VII, who in September of that year sent a letter to his legate in France demanding that a list of the supposedly erroneous propositions be sent to him, and instructing the legate to see to it that the attacks on the worthy cardinal ceased.¹⁰⁶ The committee, informed of the Pope's wishes, was again instructed to provide a list of the erroneous propositions together with the reasons for their condemnation and a clear statement of the opposing true doctrine.¹⁰⁷ During the faculty sessions which followed, it was suggested that an attempt at reconciliation should be made before a condemnation was issued. It was then agreed that a list of the erroneous propositions should be sent to Cajetan. Considerable doubt exists as to whether Cajetan ever received this list from Paris.¹⁰⁸

The list of condemned propositions was published in the spring of 1534 by Lutherans in Wittenberg.¹⁰⁹ The following positions of Cajetan

¹⁰⁵M. H. Laurent, "Quelques Documents des Archives Vaticanes (1517-1534): VII. Cajétan et l'Université de Paris (1532-1534), Revue Thomiste, XXXIX, nouvelle série XVII (1934-1935), 110-129. When the Paris proceedings began Cajetan had completed his commentaries on all New Testament books, and most Old Testament books. Still to be written were his commentaries on Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and three chapters of Isaiah. Nevertheless, the Paris proceedings make reference only to his commentaries on Psalms and the New Testament.

¹⁰⁶Clement's letter is printed by Laurent, pp. 121-122.

¹⁰⁷Allgeier, p. 429, states that Cajetan's later opponent, Ambrosius Catharinus, was in Paris during these years, but finds it impossible to determine his influence on the Paris theologians.

¹⁰⁸Laurent, p. 119. See also Thomas Aquinas Collins, "The Cajetan Controversy," The American Ecclesiastical Review, CXXVIII (1953), 93.

¹⁰⁹Epistola Theologorum Parisiensium, ad Cardinalem Coetanum reprehensoria (Vitebergae: 1534). This publication also included a letter from the Wittenberg theologians to the Paris faculty; see Laurent, pp. 120-121. The evident purpose of this publication by the Lutherans was to embarrass both Cajetan and the Paris theologians. The latter found themselves

were condemned with respect to the canon: the inferior authority assigned to the ending of Mark and the Johannine story of the adulterous woman, the denial of Pauline authorship and the full canonicity of Hebrews, and the lower status given to James, Jude, and II and III John. Closely related was their condemnation of Cajetan's views that Matthew was written in Greek instead of Hebrew, that the Vulgate contains errors, and that Holy Scripture can be correctly interpreted only on the basis of the original text.¹¹⁰

Although Cajetan may not have received the letter of censure directly from Paris, it is clear that one of his friends sent him a copy. After examining it carefully, he wrote a response and sent it to his friend, Master John of Mainz.¹¹¹ His answer is somewhat sophistic, but in the

in the peculiar position of having condemned for holding Protestant doctrines the very man sent by the Holy See to oppose Martin Luther at Augsburg in 1518, while Cajetan found himself supported by this man's followers.

The Wittenberg publication contains the only known text of the Paris censure. The condemned propositions from this censure are reproduced by Laurent, pp. 126-219.

¹¹⁰ Laurent, pp. 126-129. The censure also attacked the following Cajetanian errors: allowing divorce on account of fornication, holding that Christ instituted a voluntary confession of sins, teaching that vernacular prayers in public worship were better understood by the people than Latin prayers, holding that James 5 does not deal with the sacrament of extreme unction, suggesting that Paul may have been married at one time, stating that Dionysius the Areopatite might not be the author of the works attributed to him, and teaching that it is not absolutely clear from the Scriptures that a priest sins by marrying.

¹¹¹ This letter is added to volume V of the Opera Omnia, pp. 469-471, under the title Responsio ad censuras XVI. Articulorum sub nomine Theologorum Parisiensium editas. The document may also be found in Cajetan's Opuscula omnia (Venice: 1568) under the title Responsio ad quosdam articulos nomine theologorum Parisiensium editos, ad Magistrum Joannem studii Moguntini Regentem.

The letter bears the date December 30, 1534, but the Cardinal evidently died August 10, 1534. See M. J. Congar, "La date de la mort du Cardinal Cajétan," Angelicum, XI (1934), 602-608.

main he does not retreat from his earlier positions. He denies having said that Hebrews is not authentic. What he had written, he insists, is that "it is not clearly canonical," and this is different from saying "it is not canonical." The former statement applies to our inadequate knowledge, while the latter impugns the book. This he has not done, Cajetan insists, "but it is nevertheless certain, as long as doubts persist, that it alone does not suffice for those matters which are of faith."¹¹² Once again, he repeats his loyalty to the principles of St. Jerome:

With regard to the preceding article and similar ones, it is to be observed that I have rejected no part of the Bible not rejected by the most Blessed Jerome; and I have questioned no part or particle not also questioned by Jerome. I have followed Jerome and from his very words have deduced only what is in agreement with his treatment. For Jerome is the light of the universal church for distinguishing the parts and particles of Holy Scripture from those which do not belong to it, and for distinguishing the certain parts and particles from those which are doubtful. Why therefore am I, who follow the most blessed Jerome, accused? For in accusing me of these things, they accuse Jerome, who is the principal author of these doubts.¹¹³

Cajetan died a few months after writing this response, but his position continued to be discussed for many years.¹¹⁴

Cajetan, Karlstadt, and Erasmus were men of different backgrounds and loyalties. They did not reach the same conclusions in all details of their investigations of the biblical canon. But they brought to their

¹¹²"Certum est tamen, quod durante dubio non est tantae auctoritatis apud nos, ut sola sufficiat ad ea, quae sunt fidei. Ego igitur locutus sum de nostra notitia, non de ipsa epistola, ut verba mea clare sonant"; Responsio, Opera, V, 469.

¹¹³Ibid., V, 470.

¹¹⁴Cajetan's position was attacked after his death by Ambrosius Catharinus and Melchior Cano, but we find it defended at Trent by Girolamo Seripando and others. See infra, pp. 177 ff.

investigations a common methodology, for they were convinced that literary analysis and historical criticism were legitimate means to determine biblical canonicity. Following their humanistic preference for the authority of antiquity, they criticized the Vulgate translation on the basis of original manuscripts, thereby weakening the confidence of the church in her received text and the canon it embraced. They were agreed that the Old Testament writings found in the Vulgate but not in the Hebrew canon were useful for edification, but not canonical in the strict sense. This view was not new, having been championed by many throughout the Western tradition. What was novel, however, was the revival of earlier doubts concerning the New Testament antilegomena, and the methodology with which this was done. The Middle Ages had occasionally remembered such doubts about the authorship of Hebrews, but had denied neither its Pauline authorship nor its full authority. But Erasmus, Karlstadt, and Cajetan discussed the other antilegomena as well, and none of them insisted on the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

The humanistic critique raised two questions that were to be debated for many years. One, is canonicity so exclusively attached to the names of a certain number of privileged individuals that a denial of their authorship involves a rejection of the questioned books as non-canonical, or at least a mitigation of their authority? Erasmus and Karlstadt answered this question negatively, but Cajetan and the Paris faculty, with different conclusions, answered affirmatively. Two, is it possible that some biblical books, acknowledged to be divinely inspired and authoritative, nevertheless possess less authority than others? Erasmus with the book of Revelation, Karlstadt with his third order of books, and Cajetan with his double canon gave qualified affirmative answers to this

question, while the response of the Paris theologians was clearly negative.

Whether intended or not, the humanistic critique of the canon represented a challenge to the authority of the church. Although Cajetan, Karlstadt, and especially Erasmus affirmed the role of the church in the process of canonization, they all employed historical and literary criticism, rather than the church's authoritative decisions, as an important factor in determining canonicity. They all valued the testimony of the early church more highly than the current practice of the church. In appealing so strenuously to the early church, they gave the unmistakable impression that the church's present practice was not in undifferentiated continuity with her past tradition, and thereby set one period of tradition against another. Just as significantly, their appeal to early tradition had the goal of distinguishing sharply between canonical Scripture and non-canonical tradition. In this way, they helped shatter the coherence of Scripture and tradition so characteristic of the late medieval period. For, in their critique, Scripture and tradition had become two clearly separable entities.¹¹⁵ Both the humanistic methodology and the dogmatic consequences of that methodology were to have an important effect on succeeding generations.

¹¹⁵ Wilhelm Maurer, "Luthers Verständnis des neutestamentlichen Kanons," Die Verbindlichkeit des Kanons, Fuldaer Heft 12, herausgegeben von Friedrich Hübner (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1960), p. 53, states: "In Humanismus wird das Nebeneinander von Schrift und Tradition zuerst erkannt und zum Maszstab des Kanonsverständnisses gemacht. Die vorherige Entwicklung der Kirche ist gekennzeichnet durch ein Ineinander: der Kanon und die Tradition, die ihn geschaffen hat, werden als eine völlig unlösliche geistliche Einheit betrachtet. Die historische Blickrichtung, die dem Humanismus eigen ist, bewirkt eine grössere Differenzierung. Die Vätertradition steht dem Inhalt des Kanons, ihn selbständig auswertend, gegenüber."

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY REFORMERS AND THE BIBLICAL CANON

Without exception, the early sixteenth century reformers appealed to Holy Scripture as the ultimate authority for the faith and life of the church. Based on this authority, they did not hesitate to criticize ecclesiastical tradition or authority where they felt such criticism was needed. In theory as well as in practice, Holy Scripture was the supreme canon. Not surprisingly, therefore, the reformers gave considerable attention to evaluating the various books in the received Bible of the church. But the Bible was more than the canon for the reformers; it was also the word or address of God for man's deepest spiritual needs. Thus the early Protestant evaluation of the biblical books, while reflecting the influence of humanism, was generally marked by a deep interest in the spiritual value of the contents of the biblical writings. This fact has led many to regard the canonical criticism of the reformers as subjective and dogmatic.

Without denying the dogmatic element in this criticism, this chapter challenges the notion that it was highly subjective, and contends that the dogmatic factor had an objective basis and was not used as an independent criterion of canonicity. This is particularly claimed for the widely disseminated views of Martin Luther, whose criterion of evangelical content was derived from known apostolic books and applied to historically contested books in order to evaluate their apostolicity. This chapter further argues that the impetus to early Protestant criticism of the canon came from the inferior historical attestation of certain books in both Testaments.

Luther, Luther's followers, and early Reformed theologians -- discussed in that order in the following paragraphs -- agreed in ascribing a lower status to the Old Testament apocrypha, although all of them regarded these books as useful and included them in their editions of the Bible. In the New Testament, however, Luther and his followers were generally more critical than their Reformed contemporaries. Whether Lutheran or Reformed, the pre-Tridentine reformers discussed in this chapter agreed that the church lacks sufficient power to attribute more authority to a book than it has of itself.¹

Martin Luther

Luther regarded the Scriptures as divinely authoritative long before his biblical study led him to the "rediscovery" of the Gospel. As one schooled in the Occamist tradition with its accent on the authority of

¹Of the positions discussed in this chapter, only Luther's is well known and frequently discussed. Representative interpretations of his position are indicated and briefly characterized below, notes 56 and 66-69. In addition to the works indicated there, the article by Hans Volz, "Luthers Stellung zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments," Jahrbuch der Luther Gesellschaft, herausgegeben von Franz Lau (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1959), XXVI, 93-108, provides a wealth of data on both Luther and Leo Jud, but with little discussion of criteriology. Our discussion of Luther differs from many interpretations in ascribing greater objectivity to his criteriology, and in assessing his attitude toward the Old Testament apocrypha in greater detail.

The positions of Luther's followers and the early Reformed theologians have received neither frequent nor thorough examination in standard treatments of the canon. Some useful information on both areas is provided by Johannes Leipoldt, Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, Zweiter Teil: Mittelalter und Neuzeit (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908), pp. 88-104 and 139-143. Henry Howorth, "The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon according to the Continental Reformers. II. Luther, Zwingli, Lefèvre, and Calvin," The Journal of Theological Studies, IX (1908), pp. 188-230, provides some useful data, but his treatment is marred by a frequent lack of objectivity. Our treatment provides new data in utilizing the earliest Lutheran confessions and the early Bible editions of the reformers and their followers in various parts of Europe.

Holy Scripture, Luther had always regarded the Bible as God's book.² Two factors were especially significant in the reformer's attitude toward the Bible, however: his greater stress on the Gospel content than on the formal authority of Holy Scripture, and his recognition that the formal and material authority of Scripture is clearly superior to that of tradition and church.³ Both of these insights were achieved gradually. It was not until the Leipzig Debate of 1519 that the latter emphasis became clearly evident, and it was also there that Luther first displayed a critical stance over against the received canon.⁴

²For a discussion of Occamism and Holy Scripture, see Heiko Augustinus Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Theology (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 378-382 and 393-408. An older, but still important, study is that of Friedrich Kropatscheck, Das Schriftprinzip der lutherischen Kirche, I. Band: Die Vorgeschichte: Das Erbe des Mittelalters (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904), pp. 309-325. A shorter treatment may be found in Wilhelm Maurer, "Luthers Verständnis des neutestamentlichen Kanons," Die Verbindlichkeit des Kanons, Fuldaer Heft 12, herausgegeben von Friedrich Hübner (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1960), pp. 51-53.

Cf. supra, p. 47, for Occam's view on the Old Testament canon.

³Wilhelm Walther remarks with regard to the young Luther's acceptance of biblical authority: "Er sieht offenbar diesen Standpunkt als für jeden Christen selbstverständlich an." But he also distinguishes Luther's attitude toward the Scriptures after his discovery of the Gospel from his prior attitude: "für beide ist sie Autorität, aber für jenen nur äusserliche, für diesen auch innerliche." In "Die normale Stellung zur Heiligen Schrift," Das Erbe der Reformation, Heft 1 (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1918), pp. 11 and 14-15.

Similarly, Kemper Fullerton states: "The original authority of Scripture as inherited from the church is not ignored. . .but it is subordinated to the authority which the Scriptures possessed for Luther through the truth of its content." In "Luther's Doctrine and Criticism of Scripture," Bibliotheca Sacra, LXIII (1906), 6.

⁴For useful discussions of Luther and the Scriptures, see M. Reu, Luther and the Scriptures (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1944); Otto Scheel, Luthers Stellung zur Heiligen Schrift (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1902); Jaroslav J. Pelikan, Luther the Expositor, companion volume to the American Edition of Luther's Works (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959); and Willem Jan Kooiman, Luther and the Bible, translated by John Schmidt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961).

During a discussion of purgatory on July 8, 1519, Luther remarked, with reference to II Maccabees 12:45, that there is not one reference to purgatory in the entire Scripture that will stand up in controversy or convince the gainsayer, "for even the book of Maccabees, since it is not in the canon, does nothing against obstinate people, although it is convincing for Christians."⁵ Appealing to the authority of St. Augustine, Eck replied that Luther's statement on the canonicity of Maccabees is false, "for although they were not in the canon of the Jews, the church has nevertheless received them into the canon."⁶ Luther responded: it is evident that "the book of Maccabees belongs to the Old Testament," but St. Jerome held that only those Old Testament books in the Hebrew canon were valid in debate, while the others were to be used only for instructing the faithful. He continued:

I know that the church receives this book, and I have said so. But the church is not able to attribute more authority or strength to a book than it has of itself, just as it approves and receives the writings of other fathers, but does not thereby strengthen or improve them.⁷

On the following day, Eck returned to the question by citing the authority

⁵"nam et liber Machabeorum, cum non sit in canone, pro fidelibus potens est, contra pertinaces nihil facit," in "Disputatio Iohannis Eccii et Martini Lutheri Lipsiae habita. 1519," D. Martin Luthers Werke, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1884), II, 324, 11-12. This edition is hereafter cited as WA. Volumes in the "Deutsche Bibel" series will be cited as WA DB, while those containing Luther's "Tischreden" will be cited as WA Ti.

⁶"quamvis enim apud Habraeos in canone non fuerint, tamen ecclesia recipit eos in canonem," ibid., p. 324, 32 f.

⁷"Scio, quod ecclesia recipit hunc librum, et hoc dixi: sed non potest ecclesia plus tribuere auctoritatis aut firmitatis libro quam per seipsum habeat, sicut et ceterorum patrum opuscula approbat et recipit, sed non idea confirmat aut milliora reddit," ibid., p. 325, 17-20.

of St. Augustine and the Council of Florence.⁸ Luther replied by noting that Augustine was not in agreement with either Jerome or Eusebius; on that account, none of them possesses absolute authority. As for the Council of Florence, Luther responded: "A council is not able to make something scriptural which in its nature is not scriptural, just as the church could not make, but only approved the Gospels."⁹ This exchange between Luther and Eck is highly instructive for understanding Luther's attitude toward the canon of the Old Testament. Two things in particular should be noted. On the one hand, Luther accepted Hieronymian theory about the lower canonical status of the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament, emphasizing particularly that such books could not be used to decide doctrinal issues. Furthermore, he considered his attitude on this point to be in keeping with the best tradition of the church. On the other hand, Luther's negative attitude toward the authority of the church as the chief criterion of canonicity is also quite clear. Neither church nor council could give a book more status than it had of itself. On this last point, Luther displayed an attitude that was to characterize the general Protestant discussion of the canon.

The principles enunciated in the heat of the Leipzig Debate continued to characterize his position on the Old Testament canon. Two years later, Luther again discussed the troublesome passage in II Maccabees. This book,

⁸ His reference was to the discussion of purgatory at Florence, not to the Florentine canonical list. Cf. Joannes Dominicus Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio (Florentine: Expensis Antonii Zatta Veneti, 1759), XXXI B, 1662.

⁹ "concilium non potest facere de scriptura esse, quod non est de scriptura natura sua, sicut nec ecclesia potuit facere Evangelia, etiamsi approbavit Evangelia," WA, II, 329, 32-34.

he noted, is "the most inferior and contemptible book in the whole Bible" and is not to be counted "among the books of Holy Scripture." Why is this book biblical but not scriptural? On the one hand, Jerome says that it is not to be found in Hebrew, "in which nevertheless all books of the Old Testament are found." Second, the book is not reliable, for it contradicts I Maccabees and contains many fables.¹⁰ Thus by 1521, Luther has adopted the norm of the Hebrew canon and the content of a book as two important factors in his criteriology of Old Testament canonicity.

In the summer of 1523, Luther published the first volume of his Old Testament translation. Although this volume contained only the Pentateuch, the back of the title page listed the contents of the entire Old Testament as he intended to publish it. At the end of the books in the Hebrew canon, Luther listed the following books, without any heading and separated from the rest of the books by a space: "Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Esdras, the Book of Wisdom, Wise Man, Maccabees."¹¹ Thus already in 1523 Luther intended to publish the above works in a separate volume instead of interspersing them with the books of the Hebrew canon as had been done in the Vulgate. It is noteworthy, however, that in the remainder of the Old Testament he retained the book order of the Vulgate, rather than that of the Hebrew Bible.¹²

¹⁰"Grund und Ursach aller Artikel D. Martin Luthers, so durch römische Bulle unrechtlich verdammt sind," WA, VII, 453, 16-26. In his 1530 "Widerruf vom Fegefeuer," Luther again noted that "dis buch Machabeorum nicht jnn der zal der heiligen schrift ist, auch von den alten vetern nicht fur heiliger schrift angenommen," WA, XXX 2, 369, 2-4.

¹¹WA DB, VIII, 34.

¹²Hans Volz, p. 100, explains that Luther followed the Vulgate order "aus rein praktischen Erwägungen; denn in jahrhundertelangem kirchlichem Gebrauche der Vulgata hatte sich deren Schriftenanordnung, die auch der vorlutherischen deutschen Bibelübersetzung zugrunde lag, in weiten Kreisen

Luther immediately began carrying out his announced plans to translate the entire Old Testament. Early in 1524 his translation of the historical books appeared, but the Prayer of Manasseh, III and IV Esdras, Tobit, Judith and the additions to Esther were not included in their usual places among these books. The poetic books came off the press in the fall of 1524 as the third part of the Old Testament; this volume failed to include Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Because of the press of other duties, the fourth volume containing the prophetic books did not appear until early in 1532. As expected, this volume did not contain Baruch or the additions to Daniel. Between 1529 and 1533, Luther published individually the books of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, the additions to Daniel, and I Maccabees, but the fifth and last Old Testament volume containing these writings did not appear until the complete edition of the Bible was published in Wittenberg in 1534.¹³

In the table of contents to the 1534 edition, the books in volume five are not numbered, and an empty line separates them from the preceding books.¹⁴ A comparison of the books contained in this volume with the list projected by Luther in 1523 shows that Luther made slight changes in his plans. The earlier list contained the title "Esdras," evidently referring to III and IV Esdras, but these latter books were not included

fest eingebürgert, während die Beschäftigung mit dem hebräischen Alten Testament ausserhalb des Judentums erst sehr jungen Datums war und sich zunächst noch auf einen verhältnismässig engen Gelehrtenkreis beschränkte."

¹³Ibid., pp. 99-100 and 105-106. The critical edition of this volume is in WA DB, XII.

¹⁴WA DB, XII, 2. Cf. also WA DB, VIII, 35. The title "Apocrypha" first appeared in the table of contents in the 1538-1539 edition; cf. Volz, p. 106, n. 73.

in the 1534 edition. III Esdras was particularly disliked by Luther, who once remarked that he would gladly throw it in the Elbe,¹⁵ and on another occasion, that the book was nothing because it merely repeated what was stated better in Ezra and Nehemiah.¹⁶ Luther found some fine sayings in IV Esdras¹⁷ although he knew that it was not even contained in the Septuagint.¹⁸ He nevertheless remarked that he had not translated either book of Esdras "because they contain nothing that one could not find better in Aesop or in still slighter works."¹⁹

Luther's 1534 edition contained one other change in book content from his 1523 list, in that the Prayer of Manasseh is included at the end of the fifth volume.²⁰ The inclusion of this book can only be attributed to Luther's long-standing affection for it. Although this short prayer has been traced to the third century, it did not appear in any manuscript of the Vulgate before the thirteenth century and is not included on any known list of canonical books during the Middle Ages. It was included in the Gutenberg Bible of 1455 as an addition to II Chronicles

¹⁵WA Ti, I, 337, 11; cf. WA Ti, III, 136, 24.

¹⁶WA Ti, II, 351, 23 f.

¹⁷WA Ti, I, 337, 11-14; II, 106, 18 and 351, 24-30; III, 136, 25-26.

¹⁸"dazu im Griechischen nicht funden werden," WA DB, XII, 290, 11.

¹⁹Martin Luther, "Preface to the Book of Baruch," translated by E. Theodore Bachmann, Word and Sacrament I, edited by E. Theodore Bachmann, volume XXXV in the American Edition of Luther's Works, Helmut T. Lehmann, general editor (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 350; WA DB, XII, 290, 8-9.

Volumes in the American Edition of Luther's Works are hereafter cited as LW.

²⁰WA DB, XII, 528-532. The Prayer of Manasseh was not listed in the table of contents or on the special title page for the apocrypha, nor did Luther prepare a preface for this book.

33:13 and 19, and for the next hundred years appeared in many editions of the Vulgate as well as in several German translations. In 1519, Luther's co-worker Spalatin issued a German translation,²¹ and in 1520, Luther himself issued the prayer in Latin, describing it as "a most beautiful and useful prayer for every one making confession."²² A new German translation appeared in Luther's Betbüchlein issued in 1525 and again in 1529 and 1530. Numerous other editions of this prayer were issued during Luther's lifetime and for many years thereafter in Lutheran publications.²³

More significant than the exclusion of III and IV Esdras and the inclusion of the Prayer of Manasseh was the title given to these books in the 1534 edition. On a separate page preceding the translation are these words: "Apocrypha. These books are not held equal to the Scriptures but are useful and good to read."²⁴ Although Luther's 1534 Bible was not the first to call these books "apocrypha,"²⁵ nor the first to print these books together in a special section,²⁶ his was the first major popular

²¹"Des Konygs Manasses gebeth tzu der beicht ser dienstlich," WA, II, 64, 27-65, 11. Cf. also WA DB XII, 528-532. This booklet was reprinted at least eight times in the next two years.

²²"Confitendo Ratio," WA, VI, 158-169, especially 169, 16-37.

²³Hans Volz, "Zur Ueberlieferung des Gebetes Manasse," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, LXX (1959), 294-307.

²⁴"Apocrypha. Das sind Bücher: so nicht der heiligen Schrift gleich gehalten: und doch nützlich und gut zu lesen sind," WA DB, XII, 2.

²⁵The example of Jerome in calling these books "apocrypha" was never quite forgotten; it was followed by Belet, Comestor, Hugo of St. Cher, Tostatus, Antoninus, the preface to the 1498 Basel Bible, Karlstadt, and the 1522 Osiander Bible, for example; cf. *supra*, pp. 45, 46, 52, 59, 78 ff., and 85 (n. 78). The first Bible to use "apocrypha" as the title for these books was the 1526 Strassburg edition of the 1518 Aldine Septuagint, edited by John Lonicer; see Volz, "Luthers Stellung," p. 101.

²⁶The idea of grouping these books together is suggested not only by Rufinus and Jerome, but by the treatments of others throughout the

Bible edition to vary from the traditional practice on both counts. His description of these books showed how little he had departed from his position expressed at Leipzig in 1519. The books are clearly "not equal to the Scriptures" and therefore not canonical in the strict sense. Yet they are "useful and good to read" and therefore included in the Bible.

Luther's attitude toward the Old Testament apocrypha is also reflected in his translation of these books. Not only did he allow himself greater freedom in rendering the text, but at the same time sought to make them as readable and understandable to the people as possible. As a translator, Luther treated these books as "popular religious writings."²⁷ This attitude is also reflected in the prefaces Luther prepared for these books, in which he reflects a balance of praise and criticism. Judith is praised as a

Western tradition. Isidore, Rabanus, and some early Vulgate manuscripts grouped them together, for example; cf. supra, pp. 41-44. Luther's early colleague Karlstadt also treated these books as a distinct class, supra, p. 81. At least four sixteenth century Bibles before Luther's printed these books together in a special section at the end of the Old Testament. One was the 1522 Latin Old Testament issued by John Knoblauch in Strassburg, the sixth volume of which contained these books under the heading, "Books which are not received as canonical by the Jews"; cf. John Lenhart, "Protestant Latin Bibles of the Reformation from 1520-1570, A Bibliographical Account," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VIII (1946), 420. This practice was also followed by John Lonicus in his 1526 Strassburg edition of the 1518 Aldine Septuagint (see Volz, "Luthers Stellung," p. 101), and by the publishers of the 1529 Zürich Bible, infra, pp. 138-140. The last two were no doubt influenced by Luther's 1523 Old Testament list, however. Moreover, the 1527-1528 Roman Catholic edition of Sanctes Pagninus also separated the apocryphal books from the others, see infra, p. 162.

²⁷Wilibald Grimm, Kurzgefasste Geschichte der lutherischen Bibel-übersetzung (Jena: Hermann Constenoble, 1884), pp. 18-19. Grimm states: "Ungleich grössere Freiheit als in den kanonischen Schriften gestattete sich Luther in Verdeutschung der alttestamentlichen Apokryphen, offenbar weil er hier nicht an den heiligen Text gebunden war, daher er sehr häufig die Aufgabe des Uebersetzers mit der des Bearbeiters, Kritikers, Paraphrasten und Auslegers vertauscht, je nachdem es ihm passend schien, kleine Einschaltungen in den Text oder Auslassungen sich erlaubte, ohne Zweifel, weil er hoffte, auf solche Weise die Lectüre dieser Bücher als religiöser Volksschriften leichter, angenehmer, verständlicher und nutzbarer zu machen."

moral lesson designed especially for tyrants; it is "a fine, good, holy, useful book, well worth reading by us Christians."²⁸ Wisdom is a fine book in many respects, but chiefly because it exalts the Word of God and is "a proper exposition of the first commandment," teaching us how we may "learn to fear and trust God."²⁹ Tobit is a dramatic presentation of life in a Christian household, and as such "is useful and good for us Christians to read"; both the writing and concerns of the book "are extraordinarily Christian."³⁰ Ecclesiasticus is a "useful book for the ordinary man"; one might call it a book on home discipline or on "the virtues of a pious householder."³¹ Baruch writes "vigorously against idolatry and sets forth the law of Moses."³² I Maccabees is "good for us Christians to read and to know" because it is helpful for the understanding of Daniel; on that account this book "would not have been unworthy of a place" among the Holy Scriptures.³³ II Maccabees "contains some good things" such as the good story of the seven Maccabean martyrs.³⁴ The additions to Esther and Daniel contain "much that is good, especially the hymn of praise, Benedicite," and can be easily interpreted in terms of the state, home, or the devout company of the faithful.³⁵

²⁸LW, XXXV, 339; WA DB, XII, 6, 25.

²⁹LW, XXXV, 344-345; WA DB, XII, 54, 19-20.

³⁰LW, XXXV, 347; WA DB, XII, 110, 16-18.

³¹LW, XXXV, 348; WA DB, XII, 146, 16-17.

³²LW, XXXV, 350; WA DB, XII, 290, 13-14.

³³LW, XXXV, 350; WA DB, XII, 314, 3-12.

³⁴LW, XXXV, 352-353; WA DB, XII, 418, 1-3.

³⁵LW, XXXV, 353-354; WA DB, XII, 492, 6-8.

But Luther's praise is mixed with criticism, and it is his criticism that especially reveals his criteriology. Judith "hardly squares with the historical accounts of the Holy Scriptures."³⁶ Because Wisdom is pseudepigraphal and intensely Jewish, it was excluded outright by the ancient church fathers; nevertheless, the Roman Church in particular has regarded it as a "genuine book of sacred Scripture."³⁷ Nor did the ancient fathers include Ecclesiasticus among the books of Holy Scripture.³⁸ Baruch does not agree with accepted histories nor is it as lofty and rich in spirit as one would expect from the servant of Jeremiah.³⁹ I Maccabees, although "its words and speech adhere to the same style as the other books of Sacred Scripture," is another book "not to be found in the Hebrew Bible."⁴⁰ II Maccabees is a compilation from other books and presents the questionable story of the suicide of Razis; in reality, it "should be thrown out," but the matter "is left and referred to the pious reader to judge and decide."⁴¹ The additions to Esther and Daniel are like "beautiful religious fictions," but such cornflowers have been uprooted "because they do not appear in the Hebrew versions of Daniel and Esther."⁴²

For Luther, four factors counted against the canonicity of the apocryphal books. First, they are not to be found in the Hebrew Bible. Second, they were not received as Scripture by the early church fathers. Third,

³⁶LW, XXXV, 337; WA DB, XII, 4, 3-4.

³⁷LW, XXXV, 341-343; WA DB, XII, 52, 1-4.

³⁸LW, XXXV, 347; WA DB, XII, 144, 8-9.

³⁹LW, XXXV, 349; WA DB, XII, 290, 1-5.

⁴⁰LW, XXXV, 350; WA DB, XII, 314, 1-2.

⁴¹LW, XXXV, 352-353; WA DB, XII, 418, 1-3.

⁴²LW, XXXV, 353-354; WA DB, XII, 492, 4-5.

their authors are unknown and lived later than prophetic times. Fourth, their content reveals the soundness of their earlier rejection, for not only do they contradict the certain Scriptures in some places and thereby present unreliable historical accounts, but some books also present matters of questionable worth. Luther's discussion of content was intended not only to help the reader derive useful lessons from these books, but also to corroborate the judgment of the early fathers in excluding them from the canon. His primary criterion, however, was clearly the absence of these books from the Hebrew Bible. Luther's remarks do not suggest that he consciously violated the tradition of the church in assigning these books a lower rank.

To put Luther's criticisms of these books in their proper perspective, it must be remembered that Luther expressed himself similarly with regard to some books of the canonical Old Testament. In his Table Talk, he says, for example: "I am so hostile toward II Maccabees and Esther that I wish they did not exist, for they Judaize too much and contain much pagan crudity."⁴³ His criticisms of Jonah are so severe that he must say, "I would plainly regard it as a lie if it were not in Holy Scripture."⁴⁴ Such comments, however, are not to be found in his prefaces

⁴³WA Ti, III, 302, 10-11 and 18-19. Luther's comment on Esther in his 1525 *De servo arbitrio* was extremely severe: "Esther, quamvis hunc habeant in Canone, dignior omnibus, me iudice, qui extra Canonem haberetur," WA, XVIII, 666, 23-24.

Hans Bardtke, *Luther und das Buch Esther*, Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte, 240-241 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964), pp. 86-87, concludes with regard to Luther's attitude toward the book of Esther: "Im ganzen überwiegt doch die positive Haltung gegenüber dem Buch, und die noch 1542 erfolgende Apostrophierung der Esther als *piissima Regina* zeigt, dass er diese bejahende Haltung dem Buch gegenüber nicht aufgegeben hat."

⁴⁴WA Ti, III, 550, 10-11.

to these canonical Scriptures. More significantly, Luther printed such books in their regular position among the canonical writings, for, in spite of his criticisms, he never questioned their status as Holy Scripture. Nevertheless, the nature of the criticism is significant, for it is based on the inferior spiritual content of such books, rather than on historical or literary factors.

Luther's canonical criticism extended to the New Testament as well. Already in his Resolutiones of August, 1519, Luther challenged the status of James. He was especially troubled with James' apparent emphasis on justification by works. Luther chided his opponents for clinging so tenaciously to "this one authority," forgetting that "all other Scripture" commends faith without works for man's justification. With regard to James, he states: "The style of that epistle is far below apostolic majesty nor can it be compared in any way with Paul's, for Paul speaks about living faith."⁴⁵ Although Luther's language was evidently borrowed from Erasmus, his concept of "apostolic majesty" was clearly related to the Gospel of free grace. In his De captivitate Babylonica of 1520, Luther again challenged the apostolicity of James in connection with his discussion of the Roman Catholic sacrament of extreme unction. He wrote: "Many assert with great credibility that this epistle is not by the Apostle James and that it is not worthy of the apostolic spirit." Luther immediately added that even if the epistle were by the Apostle James, it would be beyond the authority of an apostle to institute a sacrament.⁴⁶ Already in these

⁴⁵"stilus epistolae illius longe est infra Apostolicum maiestatem nec cum Paulino ullo modo comparandus, deinde de fide viva loquitur Paulus," WA, II, 425.

⁴⁶"quod hanc Epistolam non esse Apostoli Iacobi nec apostolico spiritu dignam multi valde probabilitier asserant," WA, VI, 568, 8-11.

early remarks, Luther placed great stress on apostolicity, the testimony of the early fathers, and the apostolic content of the questioned book.

Luther's most comprehensive discussion of the New Testament canon came in his prefaces to his German New Testament of September, 1522.⁴⁷

In his general introduction to the New Testament, Luther tells the reader:

The New Testament is a good story and report, sounded forth into all the world by the apostles, telling of a true David who strove with sin, death, and the devil, and overcame them, and thereby rescued all those who were captive in sin, afflicted with death, and overpowered by the devil.⁴⁸

Since the Gospel is "nothing but the preaching about Christ," the reader should beware that he does not "make a Moses out of Christ, or a book of laws and doctrines out of the gospel."⁴⁹ These statements are crucial for understanding the nature of Luther's subsequent canonical criticism. First, he does not regard the New Testament primarily as a repository of authoritative truths for the establishment of ecclesiastical dogmas, but rather as the divine message through which God confronts man with the life and death reality of his salvation in Jesus Christ. Second, the chief content of the New Testament is the message of Christ, and the chief bearers of that message are his chosen apostles. Apostolicity and Christ-content are thereby inextricably linked together. Finally, the tenor of Luther's comments is pastoral rather than academic, for his primary aim is to enable the reader to hear the Gospel in the New Testament.⁵⁰

⁴⁷The critical German edition of these prefaces is found in WA DB, VI and VII. The latest English edition is in LW, XXXV, 225-411.

⁴⁸LW, XXXV, 358; WA DB, VI, 3-8.

⁴⁹LW, XXXV, 360; WA DB, VI, 8, 3-4.

⁵⁰Werner Georg Kümmel, "The Continuing Significance of Luther's Prefaces

Luther contended that the Gospel of God's saving action in Christ is not proclaimed everywhere in the New Testament with the same clarity, and that in some places it is not to be found at all. This thesis is expressed most clearly in the section entitled "Which are the true and noblest books of the New Testament."⁵¹ Here Luther remarks that "John's Gospel and St. Paul's epistles, especially that to the Romans, and St. Peter's first epistle are the true kernel and marrow of all the books [der rechte kern und marck unter allen buchern]," and that every Christian ought "to read them first and most" because they contain "the real nature of the Gospel [die rechte artt ist des Evangelii]."⁵² Explicitly including Galatians and Ephesians in this group, Luther asserts: these are the books "that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine."⁵³ In terms of this pastoral evangelical criterion, Luther

to the New Testament," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVII (1966), 575, states that Luther's point is the following: "one can hear the message of the New Testament as God's Gospel for mankind only insofar as the New Testament proclaims this message and we are ready to accept it as believers."

⁵¹LW, XXXV, 359-360; WA DB, VI, 10, 7-35. This section did not appear in any editions of the complete Bible, nor in editions of the New Testament published after 1537; cf. LW, XXXV, 358, n. 5.

⁵²LW, XXXV, 361-362; WA DB, VI, 10, 10-19.

⁵³"das sind die bucher, die dir Christum zeygen, und alles leren, das dyr zu wissen nott und selig ist, ob du schon kein ander buch noch lere nummer sehest noch horist," WA DB, VI, 10, 31-33; LW, XXXV, 362.

The next sentence contains Luther's often cited statement on James: "Therefore St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it [eyn rechte stroern Epistel gegen sie, denn sie doch keyn Evangelisch art an yhr hat]." In this context, Luther's statement hardly counts as a judgment on the canonicity of James; it is rather a judgment on the Gospel content of James compared with the "chief books."

Luther clearly had priorities within the New Testament. It is by no means clear at this point, however, that a judgment on canonicity is reflected by these priorities. We must therefore examine Luther's comments on the books which he criticized most severely and placed at the end of his New Testament: Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.

That these books were classed together is apparent from Luther's statement at the beginning of his preface to Hebrews: "Up to this point we have had to do with the true and certain chief books of the New Testament. The four which follow have from ancient times had a different reputation."⁵⁴ The only reason Luther gives for their separation is historical, namely, their "different reputation" in ancient times. But other factors were also involved. With regard to Hebrews, Luther omitted any mention of Paul in the title, then explicitly affirmed, "Hebrews is not an epistle of Paul, or of any other apostle." Two reasons were given for this judgment. First, the author speaks of himself as a disciple of the apostles, rather than as an apostle. Second, there are doctrinal problems in the epistle. Chapters six and ten appear to deny repentance to sinners after baptism and chapter twelve states that Esau sought repentance and did not find it. Nevertheless, Luther regarded the epistle as "marvellously fine" because of "the doctrine that he bases so constantly on the Scriptures." Noting that the author does not lay the foundation of faith, for "that is the work of the apostles," Luther observes that he nevertheless builds well on that foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones. Even though "wood, straw, or hay" are mixed with these precious stones, the

⁵⁴"Bis her haben wyr die rechten gewissen hewbt bucher des neuen testaments gehabt. Dise vier nach folgende aber, haben vor Zeytten eyn ander ansehen gehabt," WA DB, VII, 344, 2-4; LW, XXXV, 394.

reader should accept "this fine teaching with all honor." Nevertheless, "we cannot put it on the same level with the apostolic epistles."⁵⁵

Luther's preface to James begins with the reminder that the epistle "was rejected by the ancients" and continues by questioning its apostolic authorship. His argumentation is dogmatic. First, the fact that the author ascribes righteousness to works "proves that this epistle is not the work of any apostle." Second, the epistle does not preach "the passion and resurrection and office of Christ" or "lay the foundation for faith in him," which is "the office of a true apostle."

All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate Christ [Christum predigen und treyben]. And that is the true test by which to judge all books, when we see whether or not they inculcate Christ. For all the Scriptures show us Christ, Romans 3 [:21]; and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ, I Corinthians 2 [:2]. Whatever does not teach Christ is not yet apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching. Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod were doing it.⁵⁶

⁵⁵"On das man sie den Apostolischen Epistelln nit aller dinge gleychen mag," WA DB, VII, 344, 1-33, especially 29; LW, XXXV, 394-395.

⁵⁶LW, XXXV, 396; WA DB, VII, 384, 25-32. The paradoxical last sentence in this citation has been given various interpretations. Maurer, states, pp. 62-63: "Es ist klar: in allen Fällen geht Luther nicht von einem historischen, sondern von einem dogmatischen Bild des Apostolates aus. Apostel ist nicht der erste Zeuge, von dem alle christliche Verkündigung geschichtlich ihren Ausgangspunkt nimmt, sondern er ist der wahre Zeuge, dem Christus die evangelische Wahrheit unmittelbar anvertraut hat." Johannes Leipoldt, p. 67, emphasizes the dogmatic aspect of this sentence still more, but concludes from the mention of Judas, Herod, Annas, and Pilate that Luther also held that "alles 'Apostolische' aus der Zeit Jesu stammen muss." Werner Georg Kümmel, "Notwendigkeit und Grenze des Neutestamentlichen Kanons," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, XLVII (1950), 292, maintains that the correct consequence of this statement would be "dass nicht die Abfassung durch einen Apostel, sondern die Uebereinstimmung mit dem apostolischen Christuszeugnis der entscheidende Massstab für die Zugehörigkeit zum Kanon sei," but states that Luther did not draw this conclusion because "die Abfassung durch einen Apostel das entscheidende Kriterium blieb."

Many interpretations overlook the fact that Luther has derived his knowledge of what is apostolic from "all the genuine sacred books," which,

Moreover, the author appears to quote from both Galatians and I Peter; thus the author could not have been James the apostle, for he was put to death before Peter wrote his epistle. Most likely, Luther suggests, the author was "some good, pious man, who took a few sayings from the disciples of the apostles and thus tossed them off on paper." But the author "mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture."⁵⁷ Luther concludes:

Therefore, I will not have him in my Bible to be numbered among the true chief books [ynn der zal der rechten hewptbücher], though I would not thereby prevent anyone from including him or extolling him as he pleases, for there are otherwise many good sayings in him. One man is no man in worldly things; how then should this single man alone avail against Paul and all the rest of Scripture?⁵⁸

Luther's preface to Jude is very brief. As he had done with Hebrews and James, Luther argues from tradition and the contents of the book that it is not the work of an apostle. First, it appears to be "an extract or copy of St. Peter's second epistle." Second, the author writes as a disciple who came long after the apostles. Third, according to tradition, Jude labored in Persia and would have been unable to write in Greek. For these reasons, the ancient fathers were moved "to exclude this epistle

with unanimity, teach Christ. This sentence does not by-pass the historic apostolate in favor of a dogmatic one, but rather invites the reader to focus on the message, instead of the person, of the apostle. The historic apostles could have departed from the message they were commissioned to preach, just as Christ, the commissioner of the apostles, could have entrusted their message to others, even to his enemies. As future paragraphs will explain, Luther's concept of canonicity is closely bound up with the historic apostolate without insisting on apostolic authorship in the strictest sense.

⁵⁷"und zureysset die schrift, und widerstehet damit Paulo und aller Schrift," WA DB, VII, 386, 15; LW, XXXV, 397, n. 54. This statement was omitted in editions after 1530.

⁵⁸LW, XXXV, 397, n. 55; WA DB, VII, 386, 17-18. The last sentence in this citation was omitted in editions after 1530.

from the main body of the Scriptures [aus der hewptschrift zu werffen]."

Although he values the book, Luther concludes that it "need not be counted among the chief books which are supposed to lay the foundation of faith."⁵⁹

A comparison of Luther's 1522 and 1545 prefaces indicates that his attitude toward the book of Revelation became considerably milder toward the end of his life. In the 1522 preface, however, his criticism is similar to that of the previous three books. He contends that the Apocalypse is "neither apostolic or prophetic," then seeks to explain why. First, the author speaks obscurely. Not even the Old Testament prophets deal so exclusively with visions and images, and the apostles certainly do not, but "prophesy in clear and plain words." Luther argues: "it befits the apostolic office to speak clearly of Christ and his deeds, without images and visions." On account of its manner of speech, Luther likens Revelation to IV Esdras and asserts, "I can in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it." Second, the author commends his own book too highly. Third, although Jerome had some praise for the book, "many of the fathers also rejected this book a long time ago." Finally, the chief hallmark of apostolicity is absent:

Christ is neither taught nor known in it. But to teach Christ, this is the thing which an apostle is bound above all else to do; as Christ says in Acts 1 [:8], 'You shall be my witnesses.' Therefore I stick to the books which present Christ to me clearly and purely.⁶⁰

⁵⁹LW, XXXV, 397-398; WA DB, VII, 386, 22-30.

⁶⁰LW, XXXV, 398-400; WA DB, VII, 404, 28-30. Luther's 1545 preface contains only one critical comment, namely: "Some of the ancient fathers held that it was not the work of St. John, the Apostle -- as is stated in The Ecclesiastical History, Book III, chapter 25. For our part, we still share this doubt. By that, however, no one should be prevented from regarding this as the work of St. John the Apostle, or of whomever else he chooses," LW, XXXV, 400.

Luther's attitude toward these books changed little in his later years. His remarks on Revelation were more positive in 1545 than in 1522 and his later preface to James omitted some of the most offensive statements of the earlier one. There are also places in his later writings where he refers to Paul as the author of Hebrews or speaks of the Apostle Jude as the author of that epistle. He later named Apollos as the author of Hebrews, and interpreted the problems in chapters six and ten in a more favorable light.⁶¹ But Luther's attitude toward James appears to have remained essentially negative throughout his lifetime.⁶² Significantly, Luther continued to place all four books at the end of the New Testament. Moreover, they were listed without numbers in the table of contents, and were separated from the remaining books by an empty line.⁶³ While his attitude toward some of his earlier statements may have changed, his conviction about the inferior status of these

⁶¹Already in 1522, Luther suggested Apollos as the possible author, maintaining that, in any case, the author was "eyn trefflicher Apostolischer man," WA, X la, 143, 13 ff. Later, he became more definite: "Dysser Apollo Ist eyn hochverstendiger Man gewest, Die Epistel Hebreorum ist freilich sein," WA, XLV, 389, 34-35; cf. also WA, XLIV, 709, 19-20. For a later, more favorable interpretation of the troublesome passage in Hebrews 6, see WA, XLVII, 308-310.

⁶²Leipoldt, pp. 73-74; Wilhelm Walther, "Luthers spätere Ansicht über den Jakobusbrief," Zur Wertung der deutschen Reformation (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909), pp. 170-173; M. Reu, pp. 24-29.

⁶³WA DB, VI, 12. Luther's arrangement, which was without manuscript evidence or other precedent, was similar to his listing of the Old Testament apocryphal books. Although Luther later eliminated the empty line separating these books from the rest of the New Testament in the table of contents, he never returned them to their traditional place. According to Heinrich Holtzmann, Kanon und Tradition (Ludwigsburg: Ferd. Riehm, 1859), p. 153, n. 1, the first edition to number these four books appeared in 1603, while Luther's practice continued in other editions until 1689.

books remained unaltered.

In both Testaments Luther thus regarded a number of books to be of lesser authority than the chief books. But did inferiority mean non-canoncity? The answer is not simple, for in spite of Luther's negative attitude toward such books, they were included in every edition of Luther's Bible published during his lifetime (and for many years thereafter). If the disputed books were not in some sense "biblical," it is difficult to understand why Luther neither eliminated them from his Bible nor added other useful apocryphal writings to each Testament. Moreover, his language at least occasionally suggests that these books remain "Scripture," as, for example, when he contrasts them with "all other Scripture." It can also be argued that Luther's treatment of the four disputed books of the New Testament reflects a distinction of rank within the New Testament, for he merely concludes that these books are not to be ranked with the "chief books," and nowhere explicitly rejects them from the Bible.

On the other hand, Luther's remarks make it clear that he did not ascribe full authority to the questioned books. His remarks at the Leipzig Debate suggest his general attitude toward such books.⁶⁴ Luther there acknowledged II Maccabees as "Scripture" and admitted that such a book is useful for the faithful. But he denied that such books may be used as the basis for dogma, for convincing a gainsayer, or for proving a point in theological debate. They are useful and good to read, however, and Luther's prefaces and translations were designed to help the reader profit

⁶⁴ Supra, pp. 101-103.

from them. With this understanding, one may distinguish between "biblical" and "canonical" books within Luther's Bible; all included books are "biblical" and therefore useful, but not all "biblical" books are "canonical" in the strict sense of the term.

Does this mean that the four disputed books of the New Testament had the same status for Luther as the Old Testament apocrypha? Luther is not altogether clear on this point. Their status is similar in that none of them should be used as the basis of dogma, but dissimilar in that Luther regarded the disputed New Testament books more highly than most of the Old Testament apocrypha.⁶⁵ Thus, Luther not only distinguished between "biblical" and "canonical" books, but made distinctions between non-canonical books, just as he did between canonical books of the New Testament.

By what criteria did Luther make his judgments? Here students of Luther have often disagreed. Some find his ultimate criterion to be subjective and dogmatic, namely "what teaches Christ," and either condemn him⁶⁶

⁶⁵This is evident from a comparison of the prefaces, as well as from the format of his Bible. While James, Jude, Hebrews, and the Apocalypse appear without numbers at the end of the New Testament, they do not constitute a separate section of books as do the apocrypha.

⁶⁶The most vehement criticism is that of Henry Howorth, "The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon according to the Continental Reformers. I. Luther and Karlstadt," The Journal of Theological Studies, VIII (April, 1907), who states, p. 334, "This attitude of Luther meant his adoption of the most extreme theories of private judgment in deciding upon the canonicity of a biblical book. It in fact reduced the whole matter to a mere subjective question of personal caprice and choice, in which any good Christian might decide the most critical of all questions by internal illumination alone." Again, pp. 356-357: "Luther had not only definitely cut himself off from the Church, but had entirely discarded the Church's, and everybody else's, Canon of the Bible, and also the criteria by which that Canon had hitherto been determined. . . .He poured contempt and ignominy on at least four books of the New Testament. . . .thus basing his Canon on the preposterous pedestal of his own arbitrary whim."

or praise him for this.⁶⁷ Others attempt to see in Luther the forerunner of modern historical-critical study of the Scriptures, and assure us that his chief criteria of canonicity are historical.⁶⁸ Still others more correctly point to a combination of dogmatic and historical factors in Luther's criteriology.⁶⁹ A brief review of the evidence is therefore in order.

First, the obvious must be observed: Luther's Bible, in spite of its critical prefaces and arrangement of books, did contain the received canon of his day. Only books uncritically accepted in some of the current Vulgate and German editions, such as III and IV Esdras and the epistle to the Laodiceans, were excluded. He readily acknowledged that the church had received the included books as biblical, and nowhere in his writings is there evidence to suggest that Luther endeavored to begin the construction

More charitable, but nevertheless critical, is the recent Roman Catholic study by Nikolaus Appel, Kanon und Kirche, Die Kanonkrise im Heutigen Protestantismus als Kontroverstheologisches Problem (Paderborn: Bonifacius Drückerei, 1964). Basing his judgment to a large extent on Protestant authors, Appel clearly regards "was Christum treibet" as a straightforward criterion of canonicity for Luther; e.g., p. 241, "Der evangelische Charakter macht ein Buch 'kanonisch'." He describes this criterion as "unzureichend," "einer vagen Formel," and asks, "Nach welcher Norm versteht man 'diesen' Christus? Die Norm des Verstehens normiert das criterium canonicitatis!," pp. 264-265.

⁶⁷Leipoldt, pp. 60-88; Edward Reuss, History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church, translated from the second French edition by David Hunter (Second edition; Edinburgh: R. W. Hunter, 1891), pp. 320-333; Samuel Berger, La Bible au Seizième Siècle (Nancy: Berger Levrault, 1879), pp. 96-107; Kooiman, pp. 225 ff.

⁶⁸For example, Johannes Kunze, Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift und Taufbekenntnis (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1899), pp. 496-529.

⁶⁹For example, Paul Althaus, "Gehorsam und Freiheit in Luthers Stellung zur Bibel," Theologische Aufsätze (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1929), pp. 140-152; Jaroslav Pelikan, pp. 86-88; Holtzmann, Maurer, and W. G. Kümmel, passim.

of the canon anew. In beginning and continuing with the received canon, Luther was both a traditionalist and a "pragmatic realist."⁷⁰ Furthermore, Luther's criticism owed much to the judgment of the early church as reflected especially in Eusebius and Jerome. His relegation of certain books to a lower status within the Bible was not carried on capriciously, but affected only books that had been questioned in the early church.⁷¹ In spite of misgivings about certain Old Testament homologoumena, Luther did not assign them a secondary canonical status; nor did his praise for I Maccabees lead him to consider it canonical.⁷²

What Luther sought to do with the questioned books was to determine on the basis of their content whether they were in fact apostolic or prophetic. This is particularly evident in his New Testament prefaces to the questioned books. In each case he mentions their disputed authority in the ancient church, then concludes that the book is not apostolic for the reasons given. The concept of apostolicity was therefore the crucial

⁷⁰Pelikan, p. 87.

⁷¹Maurer, p. 61, contends, however, that the disputed status of these books in the early church "spielt aber für seine Urteilsbildung keine entscheidende Rolle." Similarly, Rupert E. Davies, The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), p. 36, states: "But the whole tone of the Prefaces shows that the argument from the Fathers occupies a very subordinate position in Luther's mind, and was, in all probability, an afterthought." Such judgments as Maurer's and Davies' are evidently derived from Luther's failure to set forth the historical facts in detail. The more likely reason for this failure, however, is that Luther considered such facts to be so generally well-known that they required no further explanation.

⁷²Holtzmann, p. 151, states: "Wohl aber dürfen wir darauf hinweisen, dass auch bei Luther solche Urteile nur vorkommen, wo das im Consensus der Kirche repräsentierte testimonium Sp̄ritus sancti kein Complement in einem nachweisbaren apostolischen Ursprunge finden will, und umgekehrt, wo ein vorausgesetzter apostolischer Ursprung eine mangelhafte Probe am Geisteszeugnisse besteht."

criterion in determining the canonicity of a New Testament book. What was unusual in Luther's approach was his attempt to determine apostolicity primarily on the basis of dogmatic criteria, rather than by means of historical investigation. For him, the true measure of apostolicity was the clarity of the proclamation of Christ. Both "clarity" and "proclamation of Christ" were important; Luther challenged the apostolicity of the Apocalypse in part because it lacked the former, and of James because it lacked the latter.

But the clear proclamation of Christ was not an exclusively dogmatic criterion for Luther. On the one hand, Luther maintained the essential unity of the New Testament, and found ~~that~~ unity in the Gospel of Christ. In his general introduction to the New Testament, he wrote, "There is only one Gospel, just as there is only one book -- the New Testament -- one faith, and one God who gives the promise."⁷³ On the other hand, Luther insisted on the essential relationship between this one Gospel and its primary preachers, the apostles. Luther described the New Testament as a "good story and report, sounded forth into all the world by the Apostles, telling of a true David." Thus, the preaching of Christ was both the mission and the message of the apostles. Significantly, Luther's prefaces appealed to the known apostolic books for the confirmation of this fact.⁷⁴ Luther's use of the Christ-content criterion was not simply the result of his own experience of the Gospel, but reflected the message he found Christ committing to his apostles, and the known apostolic books

⁷³LW, XXXV, 358, n. 7; WA DB, VI, 2, 18-19.

⁷⁴Luther specifically refers to Romans 3:21, I Corinthians 2:2, and Acts 1:8, but claims support for his thesis in "all the genuine sacred books" or simply "all the Scriptures"; cf. notes 56 and 60.

to be proclaiming. Applied to II and III John and II Peter, the other antilegomena of the New Testament, Luther's test yielded a positive result, for he found their message to be apostolic and therefore canonical in the strict sense.⁷⁵ "Was Christum treibet" was indeed an important criterion for Luther, but it was criterion of canonicity only secondarily, that is, only insofar as it was a criterion of apostolicity.

Two additional factors in Luther's canonical theory need to be rehearsed briefly. First, Luther clearly did not yield to the church the right to determine canonicity. This he stated most clearly in the Leipzig Debate. For Luther, a book's authority was self-authenticating; neither conciliar decision, nor papal decree, nor a thousand-year tradition could give a book more authority than it had of itself.⁷⁶ In this conviction, Luther clearly broke with the long-standing tradition of the church. Second, Luther did not establish his opinions on the canon as a binding law for

⁷⁵With regard to II and III John, Luther states: "The other two epistles are not doctrinal epistles but examples of love and of faith. They too have a true apostolic spirit," LW, XXXV, 393; WA DB, VII, 326, 25-26. In 1524, Luther supposedly remarked with reference to II Peter, "Desser gehet eyn wenig herunter unter den Apostolischen geyst. Doch ist glewlich, das sie nichts deste mynder des Apostels sey," WA, XIV, 73, 25-27. Leipoldt, p. 82, suggests, however, that this remark was made by Cruciger.

In general, it should be noted that Luther's principle of seeking Christ in the Scripture was formally not new. Tertullian, Wyclif, and Erasmus, for example, had uttered similar thoughts before him; cf. Maurer, p. 69. Luther's early colleague, Andreas Bodenstein Karlstadt, Welche bücher heilig und biblisch seind (Wittenberg: 1521), p. B 4a, stated: "Darumb sol der christlich leser vor allen dingen Christus in der schrift suchen, das ist, solche schriftten lesen die Christus mit seinem leiden, mit seiner kraft, mit seiner gütigkeit, mit seiner heiligkeit abmalen." Luther's "Christ" was shorthand for the Gospel of justification by grace through faith, which in turn embraced a broad doctrinal spectrum.

⁷⁶Pelikan, p. 87, correctly observes that "chronological grounds" alone were inadequate for Luther's judgments on canonicity.

the church. In several of his prefaces, he invites the reader to disagree with his judgment on the disputed books. For Luther, the precise limits of the canon remained an open question because he was convinced that in the "chief books" of the Bible God had spoken his saving Gospel with sufficient clarity to lead all men to their Lord, Jesus Christ.

Luther's Early Influence

Understandably, Luther's views found wide acceptance among his Lutheran followers, although few of them accepted his judgment on every detail. In some cases, however, the criticism was even sharper. Otto Brunfels, for example, argued in a 1523 pamphlet that the four Gospels taken alone are "dumb [surda]" and need the apostolic letters to give them significance. The latter are more important because they present Christ more clearly. Similarly, in 1524 John Agricola held that the epistles are superior to the Gospels, although the fourth Gospel is also very useful; like Luther, his criterion of differentiation was Christological.⁷⁷ These judgments, however, were not canonical. Although Melanchthon rarely expressed himself on the question of the canon, he too considered certain New Testament writings to be superior on dogmatic grounds.⁷⁸ He evidently did not share Luther's judgment on James, however, preferring to deal exegetically with the troublesome passages on justification.

⁷⁷Leipoldt, pp. 88-89.

⁷⁸Reuss, p. 334, states: "When recapitulating the component parts of the Bible, in order to characterize them from a doctrinal point of view, he could confine himself in the New Testament to naming the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul. It was not that he rejected the rest, but he thought the point to be of little importance." Reuss also mentions his almost total neglect of the Apocalypse.

rather than attack the canonicity of the book.⁷⁹

Andreas Althamer, the reformer of Brandenburg-Ansbach, was even more critical of James than Luther had been. In a 1527 attack on the epistle, Althamer employed historical, literary, and dogmatic arguments to conclude, "Since he alone contradicts the Holy Spirit in the Law and the Prophets, in Christ and all the Apostles, his testimony is vain." Fearing that he had offended the reader with his sharp criticism, he asserted, "this hatred is deserved." Although he later adopted a somewhat milder attitude toward James, Althamer displayed the most extreme application of Luther's judgment among all his followers.⁸⁰ Many others, however, continued for several years to challenge the canonicity of James.⁸¹

Luther's attitude toward Hebrews was apparently shared by few of his immediate followers. To be sure, many of them denied its Pauline authorship,

⁷⁹That Melanchthon did not share Luther's interpretation of James is evident from his explanation of James 2:24 in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, 244-253. Through skillful exegesis, Melanchthon concludes that "the works spoken of here are those that follow faith" and that "James says none of this, which our opponents shamelessly infer from his words." In The Book of Concord, edited by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), pp. 141-143.

⁸⁰Andreas Althamer, Annotationes in Epistolam beati Iacobi iam primum editae (Argentorati apud Ioannem Schottum, 1527). Relevant excerpts are cited in Leipoldt, pp. 90-92.

His attitude toward James was considerably milder in his later German commentary: Die Epistel S. Jacobs mit newer Auslegung Andree Althamer. Wie sie gepredigt worden zu Onoltzbach (Wittenberg: Georg Rhaw, 1533). In this work, Althamer seeks to show that James "nichts widder die rechtfertigung des glaubens schreibet. . .sondern wie sich die fromen und gerechten halten sollen," p. A 2b. His target is not only the papists, but the "falsche Christen" who "nicht nach der regel des Evanegliums und art des glaubens wandeln," *ibid.* With regard to authorship, he concludes that we will never know which James wrote it: "Ich halt eigentlich dafür/ es habe sie kein Apostel geschrieben/ sondern sonst etwa ein frommer man/ der Iacobus geheissen hab," p. A 3b.

⁸¹Among these were the pastors of Brandenburg, John Bugenhagen, and Veit Dietrich; see Leipoldt, p. 93.

but like Erasmus, refused to deny its canonicity on that account. Melanchthon, for example, usually referred to the "author of Hebrews," but treated the book as canonical Scripture.⁸² More important than the voice of individual theologians, however, was the fact that Luther's Bible together with its prefaces continued to be employed by Lutherans throughout Germany without significant changes in its format, enumeration of books, or table of contents.

The Lutheran Confessions of this period reflect very little of Luther's canonical criticism. One of the earliest provincial Lutheran confessions was Der Ansbacher evangelische Ratschlag of September 30, 1524. In spite of its lengthy discussion of biblical authority and interpretation, it contained no article on the biblical canon. In discussing the Roman sacrament of extreme unction, the authors noted that many "old and new teachers" question the authorship of James. However, they chose not to debate that question, preferring to maintain for the sake of argument that James wrote the epistle, but that neither James nor any other apostle had authority to institute sacraments.⁸³ Later, they endeavored to show that James teaches no other doctrine of justification than Paul and the remainder of

⁸²Melanchthon never forgot the questioned status of the epistle, however. In his dogmatics, when discussing the difficult passage in Hebrews 6:4, Melanchthon wrote: "the entire Letter to the Hebrews should be abandoned before this absolutely necessary article, which is clearly grounded in the words of Christ and the apostles, is allowed to fail. Ancient scholars write that the Letter to the Hebrews was not made by St. Paul but by one of the disciples of the apostle." He then sought to explain the passage in the light of other passages. See Clyde L. Manschreck, editor and translator, Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine, Loci Communes 1555 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 233.

⁸³Wilhelm F. Schmidt and K. Schornbaum, Die Fränkischen Bekenntnisse, Eine Vorstufe der Augsburger Konfession, published by the Landeskirchenrat der evang.-luth. Kirche in Bayern (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1930), p. 230.

Scripture.⁸⁴ In their discussion of purgatory, however, they assert, "The book of Maccabees is not biblical or Holy Scripture, but apocryphal, that is, uncertain with regard to its authorship and origin. It is therefore worth nothing." Augustine is cited as supporting the view that this book's primary use is for moral instruction, but even then the book "should be read and heard with great discretion and proper judgment."⁸⁵ But even this type of criticism is lacking in the more official confessions of early Lutheranism, such as the Schwabach Articles, Marburg Articles, and especially the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, and Smalcald Articles. In fact, Melancthon in the Apology treats passages from the apocryphal writings without mentioning their inferior status.⁸⁶ Following the freedom on this matter recommended by Luther, the Lutheran confessions refused to make the extent of the canon an article of faith.⁸⁷

Luther's German Bible and prefaces exerted great influence on vernacular translations that began to appear in other European lands. A translation of his New Testament into Dutch was published by Adrian van Bergen in Antwerp in 1523. Not only was the translation very close to Luther's, but Luther's prefaces were included and the books were ordered according

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 272.

⁸⁶ The passages are Tobit 4:5, 11, 19 and II Maccabees 15:14. The Apology deals with these passages because they had been adduced as proof texts against the Lutheran position by the Roman Catholic confutation of the Augsburg Confession, but it treats the passages exegetically and without challenging their canonical status. See Apology IV, 277-279, and XXI, 9, in The Book of Concord, pp. 148-149 and 230.

⁸⁷ For a brief discussion of the canon in the Lutheran Confessions, see the author's Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 28-30.

to his peculiar arrangement.⁸⁸ In 1524, Mikkelsen's translation of the New Testament appeared in Danish. Although the Gospels and Acts were translated from Erasmus' Latin version, the epistles and Revelation were taken from Luther's New Testament. Moreover, Luther's order of books was followed and his prefaces and general introduction were also translated.⁸⁹ In 1526, the Swedish New Testament of Olavus Petri appeared. Petri, who had studied under Luther in Wittenberg from 1516 to 1518, took over the classification of books from Luther's introduction, and repeated many of Luther's prefaces almost verbatim. Occasional statements from Erasmus were also included, but Petri's judgment on the contested books agreed with Luther's.⁹⁰ In 1540-1541 the whole Bible was published for the first time in Swedish at Upsala. It followed Luther's Bible of 1534 in almost every detail. The apocryphal books were so named, and were separated from the other Old Testament books. Luther's prefaces to the Old Testament, New Testament, and apocryphal writings were all translated. The New Testament also followed Luther's order.⁹¹

Luther's canonical criticism also exerted a strong influence on the English Lutheran, William Tyndale, whose English New Testament appeared in 1525. Both his translation and prefaces reflect the strong influence of Luther. Like the German reformer, he held that Paul's epistles and John's

⁸⁸ T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, compilers, Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society (London: The Bible House, 1911), II 2, 299-300, no. 3277.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 277, no. 3149.

⁹⁰ Ibid., II 4, 1492-1493, no. 8806. Several excerpts from Petri's prefaces are reprinted by Leipoldt, pp. 101-104.

⁹¹ Darlow and Moule, II 4, 1494-1495, no. 8808.

Gospel and first epistle present the grace of Christ most clearly.⁹² He placed James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation at the end of the New Testament. He pointed to the uncertainties surrounding James, Jude, and Hebrews in language closely resembling Luther's, but failed to criticize the Apocalypse. In spite of his obvious debt to Luther, however, he did not draw Luther's conclusions on the questioned books. In each instance, after stating his criticism he concluded that the book ought to be taken for Holy Scripture.⁹³ In short, Tyndale incorporated Luther's criticisms but preserved the authority of all books in the traditional New Testament canon.

Luther's influence was also evident in some of the scholarly editions of the period. In Strassburg in 1526, John Lonicer issued a four volume reprint of the Aldine Greek Bible published in 1518 in Venice. In his preface, Lonicer gave explicit testimony to the influence of Luther on his arrangement of books and nomenclature:

In the division and order of books we have followed that most distinguished phoenix of sacred letters, Martin Luther, who observed in his German version of the Bible that order which you see here. We have thus brought together in one section at the end those books which they call apocrypha. These books are not in the Hebrew Bibles and are not worthy of being printed in the same order with the others.⁹⁴

⁹²Leipoldt, p. 97. Several excerpts from Tyndale's prefaces are reprinted by Leipoldt, pp. 96-99. For a description of the Tyndale version, see Darlow and Moule, I 1, 1-2, numbers 1 and 2.

⁹³With regard to James, he concludes: "me thynketh it ought of ryght to be taken for holye Scripture." Similarly on Jude: "I se not but that it ought to have the auctorite of holye scripture," cited in Leipoldt, p. 98. On Hebrews, he states, "But in spite of these doubts this Epistle ought no more to be refused for a holy, godly, and catholic, than the other authentic Scriptures," cited by Brooke Foss Westcott, A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament (Seventh edition; London: Macmillan and Co., 1896), p. 505.

⁹⁴Cited in Volz, "Luthers Stellung," p. 101, n. 40. For a description of Lonicer's edition, see Darlow and Moule, II 3, 580, no. 4602.

The numerous editions of the Latin Bible published by Lutherans during the early years of the Reformation and thereafter also reflected the influence of Luther. Such editions were particularly influential in spreading the teaching of the reformers to the educated classes.⁹⁵

Early Reformed Theology

The reformation concern with Holy Scripture was not limited to Luther and his Lutheran followers. The reformers of Switzerland and their adherents in France and England, like their Lutheran colleagues in Germany and other lands, agreed that the Bible was the supreme norm for Christian faith and life and that vernacular editions should be placed into the hands of the people. As they engaged in theological disputations and prepared translations of the Scriptures, they too were forced to deal with the problem of the canon. In none of the early Reformed theologians, however, do we find a thorough systematic treatment on the subject.

Huldreich Zwingli, the first and most prominent of the early Swiss reformers, has left only scattered comments on the subject of the canon. One of his most suggestive discussions came during the Berne disputation of January, 1528. The discussion dealt with the invocation of the saints. Against his Roman Catholic opponent, Murer, Zwingli asserted that such intercession "may not be proved from the biblical writings." Murer countered

⁹⁵Lenhart, p. 425. Lenhart reports that Protestant scholars and printers issued the following Latin Bibles or portions thereof between 1521 and 1528: 7 complete editions, 2 Old Testament editions, 15 editions of the New Testament, 19 editions of Erasmus' paraphrases, 3 editions of the four Gospels, 32 editions of collections of other books, 6 editions of the Psalter, 104 editions of single books, 22 editions of parts of several books, 24 editions of parts of single books, and 6 concordances. See also his statistics on Protestant Latin Bibles published between 1521 and 1570, pp. 430-431.

that Apocalypse 5:8 clearly proved the intercession of saints before the Lamb. Zwingli denied this, saying, "We take no account of the Apocalypse, for it is not a biblical book; so anything of that kind that you may find in it serves us, not you."⁹⁶ Murer insisted on his passage: "Wherever in the Christian church the biblical books are printed, the book or Revelation is always included, for the holy evangelist St. John wrote it." But Zwingli could not agree: "No Scripture or history can prove to me that the book of Revelation is by John the evangelist." Murer objected, but Zwingli continued: "The name and title which read 'Apocalypse of St. John the theologian' is proof enough that it is not by John the evangelist, as the fathers said." Hoping to end the discussion of this passage, Murer replied: "Let's let it go at that and hope that the book of Revelation is biblical so that we can recommend it to a Christian congregation." Agreeing to move on to another passage, Zwingli answered: "We too recommend it to the Christian congregation and to those who understand the title."⁹⁷ This brief exchange hardly permits firm conclusions, but it does reveal that Zwingli agreed with his humanistic mentor Erasmus in his negative attitude toward the Apocalypse, and that one factor in this judgment was the non-apostolic authorship of the book.

The disputation at Berne was to touch on the question of canonicity

⁹⁶"Us Apocalypsi nemend wir kein kundschaft an, dann es nit ein biblisch buch ist; wie wol alles, das sy derglychen daryn möchtind züchen, uns dienet und nit jnen," in "Disputation zu Bern. VI. Schlussrede," Huldreich Zwingli's Werke, edited by Melchior Schuler and John Schulthess (Zürich: Friedrich Schulthess, 1830), II 1, 169.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 169-170. Leipoldt, p. 140, observes, "Dass Zwingli gerade allein die Offenbarung bestritt, wird seinem tieferen Grund haben: für einen kühl denkenden, intellektualistisch veranlagten Humanisten war dies Buch am unverständlichsten. Auch Erasmus hat sich über die Offenbarung ungünstigsten geäußert."

again. The statements of both Zwingli and his colleague Oecolampadius reveal much about their attitude toward the biblical canon. When Buchstab, the Roman Catholic spokesman, indicated that he intended to discuss passages from Tobit, Baruch, the Maccabees, and Revelation, Oecolampadius replied:

The schoolmaster ought to know that the books that have been placed together in the Bible are different and of unequal weight [ein underscheid habend, und sind nit glychs gewicht]. Some books are of such a nature that one can use their testimony against an opponent in matters of faith. Such books are called canonical, because they are to serve as a rule or norm in matters of faith [dass sy uns söllend syn als ein regel oder richtschyt in sachen des gloubens]; your books will be repelled by them. Other books are read because they contain either good examples or admonition, but they are not of such a nature that their testimonies can be used with us in discussing matters of faith. They are called Apocrypha. Therefore the schoolmaster has cause to lament.⁹⁸

Buchstab responded that one must trust the judgment of the church in determining the canon. He observed that those who criticize the Apocalypse usually challenge the canonicity of Hebrews as well, and suggested that if this were true of his opponents, they would no longer have a biblical argument against the Mass as a sacrifice. At this point, Zwingli spoke at some length on the canon. We gladly use the books which the church uses, he stated, but "each according to its value." He continued:

There are books in the Old Testament which the children of Israel did not receive for preservation in the total number of Holy Scriptures, just as Oecolampadius said before. The same is true in the New Testament. The certification of the church is not accomplished by the assembled bishops, but by all true believers. Just as we do not reject women in the church, so also we do not reject those books whose testimony we do not use in confirming the difficult matters of faith. But we do not take them into account in serious matters.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Huldreich Zwingli's Werke, II 1, 174.

⁹⁹ ". . . Die bucher, dero kundschaft wir nit nemend in bewärnuss der schweren händlen des gloubens, **verwerfend** wir nit, glych wie ouch

Accordingly, Zwingli added, we have followed the ancient custom in this important debate and used sources which no one can reject.

Since Buchstab had mentioned the book of Hebrews, Zwingli next stated his opinions on that book:

With regard to the epistle to the Hebrews, we say that each one is free to have his own opinion on its authorship. For my own person, I can see no reason for not regarding it as Pauline. It has several Hebraisms, as well as the spirit and firmness of St. Paul's other epistles. But regardless of who wrote it, true believers have always recognized through the Spirit that it is of insufficient worth to provide testimonies for the serious matters of faith [dass sy dess wert sye, dass man die schweren sachen des gloubens us jren kundschaften möge bewären]. Although the rejection of the sacrifice of the mass has a good basis in this epistle, there are sufficient grounds for rejecting it in the other epistles of Paul and the Gospels, as is often heard.¹⁰⁰

No further discussions of canonicity took place at the disputation, but several basic ideas of Zwingli and Oecolampadius had become apparent.

Both Old and New Testaments contained books of inferior worth for establishing dogmatic truth. Among these books were evidently the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament, and at least the Apocalypse and Hebrews in the New Testament. One reason for the lower status of the latter books was the church's historic doubts concerning their apostolic authorship. For, even though he acknowledged Hebrews to be Pauline, Zwingli refused to give it full authority in matters of faith. The authoritative decision of the church's bishops does not establish canonicity. Rather, canonical books are recognized as such by all believers led by the Spirit. Luther's Christological method for determining apostolicity is not in evidence, although the influence of humanism is somewhat apparent.

die wyber in der kilchen nit verworfen werdend. So man aber ernstlich sachen bezügen soll, nimmt man jr kundschaft nit an," ibid, p. 175.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Although Zwingli questioned the Apocalypse and regarded Hebrews as having less than full authority, such criticism is totally lacking when he deals with other New Testament antilegomena. In fact, he explicitly attempted to defend James, apparently with Luther's harsh judgment in mind. Commenting on James 2:17, he observed that this passage caused several of the ancients "not to number this epistle with the canonical Scriptures, since it appears to attribute salvation to works."¹⁰¹ But Zwingli notes, if the purpose of the entire epistle is diligently considered, it can be seen that James is talking about works that are linked with faith. Emphasizing that faith and works belong together, he notes that others have erred in two directions. Some have emphasized works at the expense of faith, while others "separate faith from works." Since James is talking about dead faith, he does not contradict the rest of Scripture and there is no reason to challenge the authority of his epistle.¹⁰²

Zwingli's close friend and ally, Oecolampadius, had another occasion to give his views on the canon in 1530 when Waldensian representatives sought his advice on the affairs of their church. Among their questions was one asking which were the true canonical books. Oecolampadius responded by listing the books in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament as those which "we number among the canonical Scriptures" for they are "Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit." He continued: "We do not condemn Judith, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, III and IV Esdras, three books of the Maccabees, and the two last chapters of Daniel, but we do not give them

¹⁰¹"In Epistolam Beati Iacobi Brevis Expositio," Huldrici Zuinglii Opera, edited by Melchior Schuler and John Schulthess (Zürich: Schulthessiana, 1838), VI 2, 271. Zwingli was in error in attributing this objection to the ancients, since Luther was the first to raise it.

¹⁰²Ibid.

divine authority with the other books."¹⁰³ His New Testament list, including "fourteen epistles of Paul," numbered twenty-seven books. He calls attention to six antilegomena, however: "The Apocalypse, together with the epistles of James, Jude, II Peter, and the last two of John, we do not compare with the others."¹⁰⁴ This list shows the same general attitude toward the canon held by many at that time, but also differs in certain respects. Although the Old Testament deuterocanonical books were placed on a lower level, their contents did not coincide precisely with Luther's list, for example. No mention was made of the additions to Esther or the Prayer of Manasseh, but III and IV Esdras as well as III Maccabees were included. In numbering six antilegomena, rather than four or seven, his New Testament list was also unique. But in assigning less authority to such books, Oecolampadius resembled his Lutheran contemporaries as well as Cardinal Cajetan.

The Bibles published by the Swiss reformers and their followers also reveal something of their attitude toward the biblical canon. Although Luther's New Testament and portions of his Old Testament were published in Switzerland in the early and mid-twenties, Luther's German idiom did not correspond precisely to the Swiss. Accordingly, between 1527 and 1529 great effort was made by Zwingli, Pellicanus, Jud, and Grossmann to produce

103" . . . non contemnimus, sed non divinam cum caeteris illis auctoritatem damus," in "Oekolampads erstes Gutachten für die Waldenser, Basel, den 13. Oktober, 1530," Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads, herausgegeben von der theologischen Fakultät der Universität Basel, bearbeitet von Ernst Staehelin, Band XIX in Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte, herausgegeben vom Verein für Reformationgeschichte (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1934), no. 788, p. 514.

The omission of the book of Wisdom in this list was probably an oversight.

104" . . . non cum caeteris conferamus," ibid.

the Swiss version known as the Zürich Bible. The Zürich New Testament followed Luther's very closely. Hebrews, James, Jude, and the Apocalypse were printed at the end of the New Testament and not numbered in the table of contents. Luther's prefaces to the various books, however, were omitted, just as they had been in the earlier Swiss editions of Adam Petri.¹⁰⁵ Those portions of the Old Testament already published by Luther were revised slightly and published as the first three volumes of the Zürich Bible in 1527.¹⁰⁶ At that time, however, Luther had not yet published his translation of the prophets or apocryphal writings. The Swiss reformers therefore prepared their own translation of the prophets and published it as volume four of the Zürich Bible in March, 1529. The translators are identified only as "the preachers in Zürich" and "servants of the Gospel in the city of Zürich." At the end of this volume, there is the following statement: "The end of all the prophets that are included among the biblical writings by the Jews and the ancients."¹⁰⁷

That the standard of the Hebrew canon was being followed was clearly expressed in the fifth Old Testament volume containing the deuterocanonical books. This volume, which contained the first independent German translation of these books in the sixteenth century, was the work of Zwingli's colleague, Leo Jud. On the title page, we read: "These are the books which are not found among the Jews. Recently translated anew into German

¹⁰⁵J. J. Mezger, Geschichte der Deutschen Bibelübersetzungen in der schweizerisch-reformierten Kirche von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart (Basel: Bahnmaier's Verlag, 1876), pp. 39-58 and 68-74; Darlow and Moule, II 2, 489-490, no. 4194.

¹⁰⁶Mezger, pp. 72-74.

¹⁰⁷"End aller Propheten, so vil by den Ebreern unnd by den alten under biblische geschrift gezelt sind," cited by Mezger, p. 78.

by Leo Jud."¹⁰⁸ Although the title page refers to only two books of the Maccabees, the third book was also included. In addition, the volume contained III and IV Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Susannah, and Bel and the Dragon. The edition excluded the fragments of Esther, the Song of the Three Children, and the Prayer of Manasseh. Its contents thus corresponded precisely to the list given by Oecolampadius to the Waldensians.¹⁰⁹

Jud's attitude toward these books was clearly stated in a short preface on the back of the title page. He tells the Christian reader that these books "are not to be held equal to the Holy Scriptures in worth and reverence" but nevertheless contain much that is worthwhile.¹¹⁰ He explains: "Although these books are not counted among the biblical books of Holy Scriptures either by us or by the ancients, they nevertheless contain many things which in no way contradict the faith and love taught by the biblical writings, and which even have their basis in God's Word."¹¹¹ Again at the end of this volume, he comments: "The end of these books which are not regarded by the Jews as biblical or as having the same value, although they agree with the Scriptures."¹¹² The principle thus enunciated

¹⁰⁸"Diss sind die bücher, die by den alten under biblische gschrift nit gezelt sind, ouch by den Ebraern nit gefunden. Nüwlich widerumb durch Leo Jud vertütschet," cited by Mezger, p. 85.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 85-87.

¹¹⁰"nit das sy in wärd un acht der der heiligen gschrift gleych gehalten werden söllind," cited by Howorth, p. 208.

¹¹¹"ob schon dise bücher under die Biblischen heylicher schrift bücher weder von den alten noch von uns gezelt sind, doch vil ding darinn die Biblischer gschrift dem glauben und liebe keins wägs wider sträbend ja auch etliche iren grund in Gottes wort findend," cited by Howorth, ibid.

¹¹²"Ennd diser bücher, so gschrift gemäss, doch nitt als biblisch oder in glychem maas by den hebreern gehalten worden," cited by Mezger, pp. 85-86.

was clearly that of Jerome and many later fathers, even though the contents of the volume did not agree precisely with the Vulgate tradition. Compared with Luther's attitude toward the books of Esdras and II Maccabees, Jud's judgment is much less severe, for his preface made no distinctions within the apocryphal writings.¹¹³

New editions of the Zürich Bible followed in 1530 and 1531. The 1530 edition printed the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament at the end of the New Testament and included III Maccabees in the table of contents.¹¹⁴ In 1531 the entire edition appeared in two volumes, with the deuterocanonical books printed at the end of volume one. The additions to Esther were included in this edition, but the Prayer of Manasseh and the Song of the Three Children were still omitted. The introductory and concluding comments on these books remained the same as in the 1529 edition. However, this edition also included a preface by Zwingli in which he advises the reader that such books do not have the same status as the books of the first order. He acknowledges, however, that they contain "much that is true and useful for edification and piety of life."¹¹⁵ He points out that some things are not expressed as clearly or truthfully as in the remaining books of the Bible, and advises the reader to read with

¹¹³Luther evidently did not regard Jud's translation very highly. Writing to Wenzeslaus Link May 21, 1529, he remarked, "ea, quae translulit Leo Judae Turegi, forte Zwinglio autore, mirum, quam nihili sint," WA Br, V, 75, 14-15.

¹¹⁴Darlow and Moule, II 2, 490, no. 4195.

¹¹⁵"Dise bücher sind mit den bücheren, der ersten ordnung nit in gleycher acht. Dann ob gleych vil waars unnd nutzbars das zü fromkeyt des läbens unnd erberkeyt dienet darinnen finden wirdt so sind doch nit alle ding so aussgestochen unnd lauter als in den vorgemälten," cited by Howorth, p. 213. For a description of this edition, see Darlow and Moule, II 2, 490-401, no. 4196.

discrimination "like the little bee who sucks the best out of all the flowers, or the clean animal who eats nothing unclean."¹¹⁶

Portions of Jud's translation of the deuterocanonical books were included in editions published in Worms, Strassburg, Augsburg, and Frankfurt between 1529 and 1534. In the Strassburg Bibles of 1530 and 1532 as well as the Frankfurt edition of 1534, the word "apocrypha" accompanies Jud's introductory comment to the deuterocanonical books.¹¹⁷ The contents of this section, however, remained unchanged. Luther's order of books was retained in the New Testament until the 1536 edition and thereafter. From then on in editions of the Zürich Bible, the Pauline corpus was followed by Hebrews, the Petrine epistles, the Johannine epistles, James, Jude, and Revelation.¹¹⁸ Later editions added glosses and summaries, but the contents and order of books remained unchanged.¹¹⁹

In 1534 and 1535, a new French version of the Bible was prepared and published by Calvin's friend and colleague in Geneva, Olivétan. The text itself is a revision of the earlier version of Lefèvre. The table of contents, after enumerating the books of the Hebrew canon, lists the following as "apocrypha": III and IV Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and the letter of Jeremiah, I and II Maccabees, additions to Esther, Song of the Three Children, Bel and the Dragon, and the Prayer of Manasseh. The list differs from the Zürich Bible in including the Prayer of Manasseh, and in excluding III Maccabees. Olivétan's address to the

¹¹⁶Howorth, p. 213.

¹¹⁷Volz, "Luthers Stellung," p. 104.

¹¹⁸Mezger, p. 116.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 132-142.

reader, which follows a special title page to the apocrypha, makes his canonical theory clear. Such books are apocryphal, he states, because they are not found in Hebrew or Chaldaic and "are not held to be legitimate either by the Jews or by the whole church." He quotes Jerome as his authority for affirming that they may not be read publicly in the church, but are read for the edification of the people, and not for the confirmation of the faith. He also cites Eusebius and the Ordinary Gloss to that effect. He explains to the reader that in order to speak as the oracles of God, Christians must follow the divinely inspired writings of the prophets and apostles, which writings alone are clear, true and certain. "Our Christian faith," he asserts, "does not consist of doubtful things, but of clear and most certain assurance and a very strong conviction held and confirmed by the infallible truth." The clear implication is that the reader would be best advised to read only the unquestioned Scriptures. More significantly, the certainty of Christian faith was closely linked with such books. In the New Testament, Olivétan followed the Vulgate order rather than that of the early Zürich editions, and did not question any of the antilegomena, although he named "John the Theologian" as the author of the Apocalypse.¹²⁰

In 1539, Sebastian Münster prepared a new Latin translation of the entire Bible which was published in Zürich. The title contains these words: "The apocryphal or ecclesiastical books which are outside of the

¹²⁰ La Bible Qui est toute la Sainte escripture (Neuchatel: Pierre de Wingle, 1535). Olivétan's address to the reader is found on p. AAA lb, while the title for the Apocalypse is on p. nn lb. For a further description of this edition, see Darlow and Moule, II 2, 382-385, no. 3710.

canon are added from the Septuagint version."¹²¹ This edition departed from the Zwinglian and Lutheran practice of separating the apocryphal writings, preferring instead to retain the order of the Vulgate in both Testaments. In his introductory preface to this volume, Henry Bullinger described canonical Scripture as that which "beyond controversy has been produced by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Such Scripture, he notes, has irrefutable authority and cannot be doubted. Then follow his comments on the canonical Old Testament, ending with Ezra. As "received into ecclesiastical use" he numbers Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, I and II Maccabees, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, and III and IV Esdras. He concludes: "The Jews are ignorant of all of these, although some hold the books of Maccabees among the historical accounts, as is shown by the little book written by Josephus many years ago."¹²² His treatment of the New Testament reveals little of the criticism practiced by the humanists, Luther, or even Zwingli. He refers to doubts held earlier about Hebrews, II Peter, Jude, James, and Revelation, but suggests that such doubts need not concern us:

It is clearly to be believed that those books of both Testaments which we have reviewed were inspired by the Spirit of God and transmitted to the apostles and prophets by the Lord of the church of God, and that they teach all truth as certain without any mixture of error and falsehood.¹²³

¹²¹Darlow and Moule, II 3, 929. See also Henry Howorth, "The Canon of the Bible among the Later Reformers," The Journal of Theological Studies, X (1909), 199.

¹²²"Et hos omnes Hebraei ignorant, licet de Machabaeis. . . non-nihil in historiis habeant, sicut superioribus annis edito libello ex Iosippo ostendi," cited by Howorth, "Later Reformers," p. 200.

¹²³"Credendum est plane hos quos recensuimus libros testamenti utriusque a Spiritu dei profectos et a prophetis apostolisque domini ecclesiae dei esse traditos: atque in his doceri omnem veritatem certam nihil iis vel erroris misceri vel mendacii," ibid.

Bullinger's preface thus made a clear distinction between books in the Old Testament, but a corresponding distinction is absent in the New Testament.¹²⁴

It is striking that this different way of regarding the questioned books of both Testaments occurs in a context emphasizing the divine inspiration of Scripture and linking the certainty of faith to a sure and infallible Word of God. These emphases, perceptible also in Olivetan and others, offer a partial explanation for the expressed canonical position. Under the conviction that faith depends on a certain and inspired Word of God, a doubtful canonical status for the questioned books was clearly less desirable than their simple acceptance or rejection. Convinced that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were all authored by the Holy Spirit, it was natural to regard doubtful human authorship as comparatively insignificant. Since the conviction was lacking that the Old Testament apocrypha were similarly inspired, their non-canonical status and possible fallibility was clearly affirmed. Thus the association of certainty with divine inspiration tended to remove doubts about questioned books in the canon for theologians like Bullinger and Olivetan.

The influence of continental theology was evident in the 1535 English Bible of Miles Coverdale. His New Testament followed the book order of Luther, Tyndale and the early Zürich Bibles. His Old Testament was divided into four sections, the last of which was headed "The Apocrypha." It contained the following books: III and IV Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, and I and II Maccabees. Both the Prayer of Manasseh and III Maccabees were

¹²⁴ Bullinger's preface also appeared in translation in the 1543 and 1545 editions of the Zürich Bible, *ibid.*

omitted. On a special title page with the heading "Apocripha" we find the following statement: "The bokes and treatises which amonge the fathers of olde are not rekened to be of like authorite with the other bokes of the byble, neither are they founde in the Canon of the Hebrue." Then follows an introduction to the apocryphal books which closely resembles that of Zwingli in the 1531 Zürich Bible. Coverdale writes:

These bokes which be called Apocrypha, are not judged amonge the doctours to be of like reputacion with the other scripture, as thou mayest perceave by S. Ierome in epistola ad Paulinum. And the chefe cause thereof is this: there be many places in them, that seme to be repugnant unto the open and manyfest trueth in the other bokes of the byble. . . . Yet I doute not verely, yf they were equally conferred with the other open scripture. . . . they shulde neither seme contrary, ner be untruly and perversly alledged.

The remainder of the introduction gives the reader instructions on how to follow the plan text and let the Holy Spirit be his guide.¹²⁵

The general pattern of Coverdale's Bible was retained in Matthew's Bible of 1537, except that the Prayer of Manasseh was included and the introduction to the apocryphal books was a translation of Olivetan's preface, with only slight changes.¹²⁶ Taverner's Bible of 1539 was a revision of Matthew's Bible, but did not include any explanatory preface to the separate section of apocryphal books. Luther's New Testament order

¹²⁵ Biblia. The Byble: that is, the Holy Scryptures of the Olde and New Testament, faythfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn in to Englyshe ([Marburg: Eucharius Cervicornus and Johannes Soter], 1535). Coverdale's introduction to the apocryphal books is on the back of the second title page following the book of Malachi. For a description of the Coverdale Bible, see Darlow and Moule, I 1, 6-9, no. 7.

¹²⁶ Darlow and Moule, I 1, 15-17, no. 17. See also Henry Howorth, "The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon in the Anglican Church," The Journal of Theological Studies, VIII (1906), 10-13.

was still present, however.¹²⁷ In Coverdale's Great Bible of 1539, however, Luther's order was abandoned for the Vulgate order, and the word "Apocrypha" in the Old Testament section was changed to "Hagiographa."¹²⁸ Although early editions to the Great Bible contained Olivétan's preface in English, the fifth edition published in 1541 no longer included an introduction and the word "Hagiographa" was no longer printed on the second title page.¹²⁹ Thus all sixteenth-century English Bibles published prior to the Council of Trent clearly distinguished between two classes of books in the Old Testament. Those editions published prior to 1539 also retained a measure of criticism in the New Testament by printing Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation at the end. But with the publication of the 1539 Great Bible, even this remnant of Luther's criticism tended to be forgotten.

The explicit statements and Bible editions of the Swiss reformers and their followers reveal certain general characteristics about their attitude toward the biblical canon. Without exception, only those Old Testament books contained in the Hebrew canon were accorded full authority. The books added by the Septuagint and printed in the Vulgate were generally grouped together and regarded as apocryphal writings. This was not a term of reproach, however, for such books were regarded as useful. The books included in this class more closely resembled the contents of the Vulgate

¹²⁷Darlow and Moule, I 1, 20-21, no. 24; Howorth, "Canon in the Anglican Church," pp. 10-14.

¹²⁸Darlow and Moule, I 1, 21-23, no. 25; Howorth, "Canon in the Anglican Church," p. 14.

¹²⁹Darlow and Moule, I 1, 29-30, no. 35; Howorth, "Canon in the Anglican Church," pp. 15-16.

than the similar classification of Luther, however. The Reformed theologians generally included III and IV Esdras and often III Maccabees, but often excluded the Prayer of Manasseh and some additions to Daniel. The criticism of these books was often sharper than that of Luther, and comments on them tended to be more concerned with limiting their dogmatic authority than with aiding the reader to use them with profit. The criterion for separating them in a distinct class was the same as that followed by humanism and the Lutheran reformers, namely, the absence of such books in the Hebrew canon as learned from the testimony of Jerome.

The Reformed theologians were generally less critical of certain New Testament writings than were Luther and his followers. The early statements of Zwingli and Oecolampadius, to be sure, reveal severe criticisms of the Apocalypse and the general conviction that all New Testament antilegomena possessed less authority than the homologoumena. The grounds for this early criticism were more humanistic than dogmatic, however. But within a few years this early criticism of the antilegomena was no longer heard, and even Luther's New Testament book order had been discontinued in all Reformed versions of the New Testament by 1540. One plausible reason for this was the stress given to the doctrine of inspiration with its levelling tendency to remove such distinctions. Thus the canonical theories of Luther exerted less influence among the Reformed theologians than did his translations of Scripture.

But whether Lutheran or Reformed, the canonical criticism of the early reformers was significant for the contemporary ecclesiastical situation. Humanistic criticisms of the canon tended to separate tradition from Scripture and employ the former to determine the precise limits of the latter. But for the reformers, especially the Lutherans, tradition provided only

the original point of reference for a critique of the canon. Neither Lutheran nor Reformed theologians sought to construct the canon anew, but endeavored to work with the canon received by tradition. Where that tradition revealed that apostolic and prophetic authorship was questionable, attempts were made, particularly by Luther, to determine the canonicity of such books from the Scriptures themselves. Both Lutherans and Reformed theologians were agreed that the canonical limits could not be set by an authoritative act of the church. Luther expressed this conviction already in 1519 and it was given systematic articulation by John Calvin in 1539.¹³⁰ In this conviction, as well as in the results of that conviction found in nearly every Protestant edition of the Scripture, the reliability of the Vulgate and its canon was challenged, and the authority of the church itself was subordinated to that of the Scriptures. That many of the reformers' utterances on canonicity occurred in the context of discussions of such doctrines as purgatory (II Maccabees), the invocation of saints (Revelation), the sacrament of extreme unction (James), and the doctrine of justification itself (James), could only have the further effect of stiffening the Roman Catholic defenses against attacks on such books. Thus the nature and context of the reformation criticism of the canon contributed to the near impossibility of discussing the biblical canon as a problem in its own right.

¹³⁰ Calvin's discussion of the biblical canon is treated below in chapter five, pp. 228-239.

CHAPTER IV

ROMAN CATHOLIC DISCUSSION AND DECISION ON THE CANON

Both the humanistic and early Protestant critique of the canon represented a challenge to ecclesiastical authority. To be sure, the Bibles published by the reformers and humanists continued to contain the received books, for the point of their criticism was not to reject certain books altogether, but to deny their full authority in matters of faith. But the criteriology employed in making that judgment not only questioned the prevailing view that the church's tradition was unanimous and continuous, but denied the right of the church to determine canonicity solely by appealing to its own authority. Such views were not limited to the reformers and their followers, for Erasmus and Cajetan were loyal sons of the church, and their views found acceptance also among Roman Catholics. But canonical criticism was too closely associated with the general reformation attack on ecclesiastical authority to be either widely accepted or completely ignored. Not surprisingly, the attitude displayed by most of the early Roman Catholic polemicists as well as the Council of Trent was essentially negative toward this criticism.

This chapter reviews some of the most important pre-Tridentine Roman Catholic discussions of the canon, then examines the debate and decree on the biblical canon at the Council of Trent. The first section, which reports the views of Eck, Fisher, the Council of Sens, Pighius, Cochlaeus, and others, reveals how similarly a majority of Roman Catholic spokesmen voiced their opposition to humanistic and Protestant criticism of the canon. But it also discusses the more positive, but still critical, reaction of

John Driedo, and reveals the acceptance of critical views in some Roman Catholic Bible editions of the period. The second section of this chapter carefully examines the deliberations at Trent before analyzing the decree on the canon. This section again reveals a largely negative attitude toward criticism of the canon, but also indicates that several others at Trent accepted such criticism. The deliberations at Trent also provide the basis for our contention that the Tridentine fathers did not intend their decree to eliminate distinctions of authority within the accepted canon, even though a majority of fathers did not personally favor such distinctions. In both sections, this chapter indicates that sixteenth century Roman Catholics, whether negatively or positively disposed to canonical criticism, emphasized the right of the church to determine the extent of the canon on the basis of her tradition.¹

The Pre-Tridentine Discussion

One of the earliest Roman Catholic defenders of the traditional

¹Very little of the material discussed in the first section has been presented elsewhere. This material is significant for several reasons. It illustrates the limited inroads of canonical criticism within the Roman Catholic Church, helps explain why such criticism was largely unacceptable, reveals how the polemical context helped shape the Roman emphasis on the role of the church in determining canonicity, and illustrates the theological background of the Tridentine discussion and decree.

Our discussion of Trent is based on sources largely unavailable to earlier treatments of the canon. Earlier Protestant and Roman Catholic interpretations of Trent are generally limited to the decree, or at best, to secondary accounts of the proceedings. See, for example, Johannes Leipoldt, Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, Zweiter Teil: Mittelalter und Neuzeit (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908), pp. 43-51, and Edward Reuss, History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church, translated from the second French edition by David Hunter (Edinburgh: R. W. Hunter, 1891), pp. 274-282. On the other hand, the 1929 monograph of Maichle and especially the two more recent articles by Duncker (cited in n. 114) are extremely useful guides to the Tridentine sources and in several instances support our conclusion.

canon was John Eck. His response to Luther's criticism of II Maccabees during the course of their 1519 Leipzig Debate typified the position he was also to maintain in later writings. Luther's statement that the Maccabean books are not in the canon is false, he asserted, "for although they were not in the canon of the Jews, the church has nevertheless received them into the canon."² When Luther replied that the church could not give a book more authority than it possessed of itself, Eck responded by citing Augustine's statement that the church has only four Gospels because it has received no others as canonical. Furthermore, he reminded Luther, the Council of Florence had used testimony from II Maccabees in its decision on purgatory.³ To Luther's rejoinder that a council could not make a book canonical, Eck replied:

Since many very learned men were present at that council, I prefer to believe a council guided by the Holy Spirit rather than master Luther, not because a council may make something to be Scripture which is not Scripture, but because I believe a council has a better sense and understanding of the Scriptures for determining that something found in Scripture is indeed Scripture.⁴

Eck's early defense of the canonicity of Maccabees was thus based directly on the authoritative decision of the church.

In his 1525 Enchiridion against Lutheran errors, Eck again dealt with Luther's attitude toward the canon, particularly his criticism of

²"quamvis enim apud Hebraeos in canone non fuerint, tamen ecclesia recepit eos in canonem," in "Disputatio Iohannis Eccii et Martini Lutheri Lipsiae habita. 1519," D. Martin Luthers Werke, II (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1884), 324, 32-33.

³Ibid., p. 326, 10-20. Cf. supra, p. 103, n. 8.

⁴"...non quod concilium faciat aliquid de scriptura quod non sit, sed quod credam concilium melius habere sensum et intelligentiam scripturarum decernendo hoc esse de scriptura quod in scriptura reperitur," ibid., p. 335, 3-7.

Maccabees and James.⁵ Acknowledging that the books of the Maccabees were not canonical among the Jews, Eck asserts: "All the canons of the church on the canonical scriptures enumerate the Maccabean books," and cites Augustine, the council of Carthage, and even Jerome's prologue to support this view. Whoever denies the canonicity of these books, he adds, "is not a child of the church, but a product of the synagog." ⁶ Although the Epistle of James was also doubted by some in the early church, "it nevertheless obtained canonical authority," as Jerome testifies, and was placed first among the canonical epistles. He warns: "If you do not heed the church's approval of this epistle, all things will now be uncertain; for in this rash way, he may even deny the epistles of Paul."⁷ Eck's appeal to the authority of the church rested on his assumption that the church is older than the Scripture, and that "Scripture is not authentic without the authority of the church, for the authors of Scripture are members of the church." There would be no reason to recognize the four Gospels as canonical, he suggests, "unless you with St. Augustine humbly confess the authority of the church."⁸ He notes

⁵Johann Eck, Enchiridion locorum communium adversus Lutteranos, ab autore iam tertio recognitum et duobus locis auctum (Landshut: Johann Weissenburger, 1526).

Hugo Laemmer, Die vortridentinisch-katholische Theologie des Reformation-Zeitalters aus den Quellen dargestellt (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1858), p. 26, states that this book enjoyed wide acceptance among the Roman Catholic clergy of Germany, France, and Belgium.

⁶"non esse filium ecclesiae, sed spurium synagogae," Enchiridion, p. K 2b. Cf. also p. G 4b.

⁷"Quod si ecclesiam non audis hanc epistolam approbantem: iam omnia erunt incerta: quia huius modi temerarius, etiam negaret epistolas Pauli," ibid., p. F 2a.

⁸"Scriptura non est autentica sine auctoritate ecclesiae: scriptores enim canonici sunt membra ecclesiae. . . .nisi humiliter confitearis ecclesiae auctoritatem cum beato Augustino," ibid., p. A 7b.

that it is typical of heretics to reject certain writings of the Scriptures which disprove their error; so also "Luther rejects the epistle of James which opposes him, and similarly the Maccabees."⁹ He urges the followers of Luther to recognize the greater authority of councils and church above Scripture, to acknowledge the primacy of Peter, and to admit that Scripture alone is not a sufficient basis for faith. His basis of appeal is still evident in his 1537 German edition of the Bible, where his table of contents describes the biblical books, including the Old Testament apocrypha, as "accepted by the church."¹⁰ At the end of the list of books, Eck advises the reader not to be disturbed by those who attack various books, but to remain with the church's canon.¹¹

Another early defender of the Roman Catholic faith was Henry VIII, king of England, who in 1521 wrote a lengthy reply to Luther's Babylonian Captivity of the Church.¹² Henry was particularly disturbed with Luther's treatment of James. Admitting that the epistle was formerly doubted by

⁹"Ludder reiiciet epistolam S. Iacobi, qua adversat sibi, similiter Machabeos," ibid., p. B 3b.

¹⁰Johann Eck, Bibel Alt und New Testament nach dem Text in der hailigen Kirchen gebraucht, mit fleiss auf Hohteutsch verdolmetscht (Ingolstadt: Georg Krapffen, 1537).

Eck's table of contents lists III and IV Esdras, but with the remark that they are "nit Biblisch." At the end of the New Testament, Eck includes III Maccabees and the Epistle to the Laodiceans, but with the note that they are "ausserhalb der Byblischen bücher."

¹¹"Diss ist die ordnung der bücher in der Kirchen und von denen die bisher darin bliben gehalten. Darum lass dich nit kümmern das etlich darin umgand hin und her die büchern zu mustern und zu setzen ihrs gfallens, bleib du bei der kirchen," ibid., n.p.

¹²Henry VIII, King of England, Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martin Lutherum (Romas: Stephanus Guillireti, 1521).

The pope awarded Henry VIII the title "Defensor fidei" for this work.

a few, he adduces the testimony of Jerome against Luther.¹³ That Luther found the epistle lacking in apostolic spirit was especially upsetting. How can this be, Henry asks, since the church, "whose judgment in this matter cannot err, has judged it to be full of the apostolic spirit."¹⁴ Luther is guilty of blasphemy either way: if an apostle wrote it, he has blasphemed an apostle; if he holds that the church has erred, he blasphemes the church. He suggests that Luther's real reason for rejecting James is that the book opposes Luther's views on faith and works, then proceeds to show that this teaching of James is supported by the rest of Scripture.¹⁵ He urges Luther to accept the authority of the church, which alone is able to "discern the Word of God from the word of men,"¹⁶ and emphasizes that the church cannot err in such matters, for she is guided by God himself.¹⁷

A more thorough attack of Luther's teaching was published in 1523 by Henry's loyal subject, Bishop John Fisher of Rochester.¹⁸ Like Henry

¹³"Ego producam unum, qui sufficere debet adversus multos, beatum Hieronymum," *ibid.*, p. t 4b.

¹⁴"ecclesia, cuius iudicium hac in re falli non potest, apostolico spiritu iudicavit plenam," *ibid.*, p. u la. Henry appears to be unaware that Luther's reference to the "apostolic spirit" of James was terminology borrowed from Erasmus, but given a different connotation.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. u 4a-b.

¹⁶"Hoc sane habet ecclesia, quod potest discernere verbum Dei a verbis hominum," *ibid.*, p. r 2a.

¹⁷"Non igitur errare potest ecclesia in suscipiendis sacramentis fidei, non magis inquam, quam errare potest in suscipiendis scripturis," *ibid.*, p. r 3a.

¹⁸John Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio*, iuxta verum ac originalem archetypum diligentissime recognita et vitiis omnibus expurgata (Coloniae: Petrus Quentell, 1524).

Laemmer, p. 19, states that this work is "in formeller und materieller Beziehung eine der gediegensten polemischen Schriften aus der ersten Hälfte des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts."

VIII, Fisher was particularly disturbed by Luther's criticism of James and Maccabees. He was convinced that Luther rejected these books only because they disagreed with his teachings. Although he was aware of the Jewish rejection of the Maccabean books, he asserts simply that "the church holds them to be canonical."¹⁹ He endeavors to show that Luther's rejection of certain books follows a pattern set by other heretics such as Arius, Macedonius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Pelagius, and noted already by Tertullian.²⁰ Luther and such heretics, he asserts,

pervert or corrupt the scriptures for their own meaning, despise the sacred interpreters, condemn the canons and councils, reject apostolic traditions, regard long-standing customs of the church as nothing, and act as though the Spirit, who effectively instructs the church in all things to be believed, no longer abides in her.²¹

Luther needs to recognize, Fisher maintains, that "Holy Scripture, which you nevertheless undermine, cannot be the judge,"²² for the church is not only the pillar and foundation, but the custodian of truth. Just as Moses judged the Jews, so "among us, the See of Peter rightfully judges" and "we must have recourse to the See of Peter for ending controversies."²³ The church's judgment is true, because "the Holy Spirit was sent that he might remain in the church forever."²⁴

¹⁹"quod non Iudaei, sed ecclesia pro canonicis habet," *ibid.*, p. CCLXIII.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. V and VI.

²¹"...perinde acsi non permaneret in ecclesia spiritus, qui de credendis omnibus eam efficaciter instruat," *ibid.*, p. III.

²²"Is iudex (quem tamen tu moliris) non potest esse scriptura sacra," *ibid.*, p. VII.

²³"apud nos, Cathedra Petri iure censet. . . .ad Petri cathedram pro dirimendis controversiis confugiendum est," *ibid.*

²⁴"missus fuerat spiritus sanctus, ut in ecclesia perpetue maneret," *ibid.*, p. X.

Luther's New Testament was the target of the 1524 Annotationes of Hieronymus Emser. His preface reproaches Luther for his many errors and distortions. Among these, he lists Luther's emphasis that there is only one Gospel, his refusal to regard the Gospel as a book of instruction, and his subordination of the synoptic Gospels to the Gospel of John. Such error is not surprising, Emser notes, for one who does not hesitate to blaspheme the holy Apostle James by calling his book an epistle of straw.²⁵ Moreover, Luther "lists and orders the books of the New Testament differently than the Christian church orders them," and more seriously, "even shortens the New Testament, and rejects and removes some books from it." These books, he adds, "the Christian church canonized a thousand years ago and incorporated them in the testament of Christ, which action is more to be believed than a thousand Luthers."²⁶ Luther's doubts about such books should carry little weight. Emser asks, "Should not the accepted order and preservation of the canonical books by the whole Christian church have more weight and belief among us than the whims or doubts of various individuals?"²⁷ Furthermore, the fact that some books were once doubted before they were canonized by the church does not mean that they

²⁵Annotationes des hoechgeleerten und Christlichen doctoers Hieronymi Emseris saeligen, uber Luthers new Testament, zum dritten mall gedruckt (Loellen: In den Evenmaent, 1528), pp. XII b - XVI a. We have used a microfilm copy of this work obtained from the Foundation on Reformation Research, St. Louis, Mo.

²⁶"Und letzten verkurtz Lutther auch das nawe Testament und verwurfft und verstoeft etliche bucher darauss. . . wolche doch die Christeliche kirch vor tawsent iaren canonizirt unnd dem testament Christi eyngeleybt hat, wolcher, mer zu glauben dan tawsent Lutern," ibid., pp. XVI b - XVII a.

²⁷"Dan solte der gantze Christenliche kyrchen eyntrechtiger ordnung und bewerbung der Canonischen bucher nycht mer stat oder glaubens bey uns haben dan etzlicher einzeln personen whan oder zweyffel?", ibid., p. XVII a.

may still be doubted. The church, rather than individual Christians, preserves and judges all canonical scriptures, and her judgment was evident already at the council of Nicea.²⁸ Ultimately, the human authorship of certain biblical books is unimportant, because everything good has come down from above.²⁹

Emser also discussed Luther's judgment on Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation. He suggests that Luther criticized Hebrews because it exalts the priesthood and episcopacy so highly. Nevertheless, "the Christian church has accepted it and regards it with certainty as one of St. Paul's epistles on the basis of the witness and information of many ancient saints," such as Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose.³⁰ Luther's rejection of James is directed at a book "authorized and accepted by the Christian church a thousand years ago." Nor is James in contradiction to Paul on faith and good works; he rather agrees with "Paul, Christ, and the entire canonical Scripture."³¹ Jude did not take his material from II Peter, but from the Holy Spirit. Even if he had borrowed a few sayings from Peter, that would not have been so serious as Luther's practice of rejecting whole books or borrowing much of his material from the writings of Wyclif and Huss. Moreover, this epistle was rejected by only a few

²⁸Ibid., p. CXLIV b.

²⁹"...tzu disputirn wo es herkomm oder wer es gescriben hab, diweyl wir gewiss sein das alles gut von oben herab kommet," ibid., p. CXLV a.

³⁰"Aber die Christlich kirch hat sie . . . angenommen und helt sie gewiss vur S. Pauli Epistel eyne, und das aus getzeugnis und kundtschaft vil alter heiliger," ibid., p. CXLVII b.

³¹"Vor tausent iaren von der Christlichen kirchen auctorisirt und angenommen," ibid., p. CLII a; "Sonder in dem mit Paulo, Christo und der gantzen Canonischen Schrifft ubereintrifft," ibid., p. XLVI a.

heretics in the early church.³² According to Emser, Luther rejected the Apocalypse chiefly because it warns against false teachers so often, and also emphasizes works more than faith. Luther's complaint that the book is unclear is in reality a good argument for its prophetic character. Its author is John the evangelist, who was also called "the theologian" because of his teachings on the deity of Christ. More importantly, "the Christian church has accepted the Revelation of John as canonical and valuable."³³ Emser concludes his tract with an appeal to "remain with the use and practice of the Christian church. For it sounds very bad when one who wants to be a Christian nevertheless attacks everything which the Christian church has ordered and held for so many centuries."³⁴

Emser's criticism of Luther's judgments is also evident in his 1527 edition of the New Testament, which nevertheless borrowed heavily from Luther's translation.³⁵ Emser follows the regular Vulgate order of books, and refutes Luther's criticisms in short prefaces to the controverted books. Paul himself wrote the epistle to the Hebrews and the book is

³²"der nicht alleyn etzlich spruch sondern gantze bucher und schier alles das er geicheben hatt aus Wickleffs und Hussens cathonichen gestolen," ibid., p. CLVII a.

³³"die christliche Kirch die offenbarung Ioannis fur canonisch und bewert angenommen hat," ibid., p. CLXI b.

³⁴"bei der Christenlichen kyrchenn brauch und ubung bleiben. Dan es lawth gar ubell das eyner ein Christ sein wil und doneben alles dz anfechten dz sie Christlich kirch vor so vyl hund'tiaren geordnet und gehalten hatt," ibid., p. CLXVI b.

³⁵Hieronymus Emser, Das naw Testament nach lawt der Christlichen kirchen bewerte text, corrigirt, un wider umb zu recht gebracht (Dresden: W. Stöckel, 1527). Microfilm copy in Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, of original in New York Public Library.

For a detailed account of Emser's New Testament, see Kenneth A. Strand, Reformation Bibles in the Crossfire (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1961).

not in contradiction to the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass.³⁶ Heretics reject James because of its teaching on good works, but its content agrees with the rest of Scripture and "the Christian church has canonized and accepted it."³⁷ Jude was written by the brother of James, and, although some heretics have attacked it, its canonical status is not in doubt. The book of Revelation was written by the evangelist who was called "the theologian" by the Greeks because "he has spoken more highly and deeply about God than any other evangelist or apostle." That heretics feel uncomfortable with this book is because they reject God's Word.³⁸

A provincial council was held in Sens in 1527-1528 to attack the heresies of the Lutherans and adopt certain reform measures for the church.³⁹ This council, which was not without significance for the later Tridentine decree on Scripture and tradition,⁴⁰ dealt with the authority of the church to determine canonicity in its fourth decree.⁴¹ The decree begins by acknowledging that Holy Scripture is authoritative and without error because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. But, it adds immediately, no argument is more distorted or invalid than one taken individually and subjectively

³⁶Emser, Das New Testament, p. CLII a.

³⁷"Aber die Christlich kirch hat sie canonizirt und angenommen," ibid., p. CLIX b.

³⁸Ibid., p. CLXXI a.

³⁹Joannes Dominicus Mansi, "Concilium Senonense, dici consuetum Parisiense," Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio (Paris: Expensis Hubert Wilter, 1902), XXXII, 1149-1202.

⁴⁰Johannes Beumer, "Die Lehre des Provinzialkonzils von Sens über Schrift und Tradition," Scholastik, XXXVII (1962), 222-226.

⁴¹The decree is entitled, "Quod ad ecclesiam spectet, determinare, qui libri sint canonici," Mansi, XXXII, 1164-1165.

from the Scriptures.⁴² Persons who use the Scriptures this way are impossible to deal with, for they reject books cited against them and defend books usually rejected. It is typical of all heretics, the decree continues, that they attempt to support their error with Scripture, while ignoring the interpretations of the church.

Therefore, when disagreements about the faith arise, it is often useless to consult the Scriptures, unless the contention is settled by the certain and infallible authority of the church, which distinguishes a canonical book from an apocryphal one, the catholic meaning from an heretical one, and the true from the adulterated.⁴³

The authority of the church in such matters comes from the Holy Spirit who teaches us all things through the instruments of the fathers and sacred councils; whoever seeks to understand the Scriptures apart from this assistance does not understand what the Scriptures say.⁴⁴ The same principle applies to the canon of Scripture:

Therefore, in enumerating the books of canonical scripture, whoever does not follow the use and authority prescribed by the church, and rejects the sacred third Council of Carthage, the decrees of Innocent and Gelasius, and finally the catalog of books defined by the holy fathers; and who, in interpreting the Scriptures, does not feed his flock near the tents of the shepherds, but digs for himself scattered cisterns that are unable to hold water; and who, spurning the footsteps of the orthodox fathers, follows the judgment of his own spirit; let him be repressed as a schismatic and as a kindler and promoter of all heresy with such rashness.⁴⁵

⁴²"At nihilo minus mutilum est et prorsus invalidum sumptum e scripturis argumentum, si pro cujusvis arbitrio, quod adductum fuerit," *ibid.*, col. 1164 C.

⁴³"Obortis igitur de fide dissidiis, frustra saepe scriptura consuliter, nisi ecclesiae certa et infallibilis litem dirimat auctoritas, quae canonicum librum ab apocrypho, catholicum sensum ab haeretico, germanum ab adulterino, discernat," *ibid.*, col. 1164 D.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, col. 1164 E.

⁴⁵"In enumerandis itaque canonicae scripturae libris, qui praescriptum ecclesiae usum et auctoritatem non sequitur, sacrum Carthaginense concilium,

The council's appeal to the authority and use of the church as the pre-eminent criterion of canonicity is unmistakable.

The years 1527 and 1528 saw not only the decree of Sens and the condemnation of Erasmus' canonical views by the Paris theological faculty,⁴⁶ but also the publication of three Roman Catholic Bibles that reflected a more positive attitude toward the humanistic and reformation criticism of the canon. One of these was the Latin edition published by Petreius in Nuremberg in 1527. The Vulgate order of books and Jerome's prefaces were retained, but the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament were described as "Apocryphal or non-canonical books, which appear nowhere among the Jews."⁴⁷ Included among these books were the Prayer of Manasseh and III and IV Esdras. Several of the books contain marginal notes such as "These are not canonical," or "Which is not in the canon," or "This is not found in the Hebrew nor is it in the canon." This edition was the first known Roman Catholic edition to describe these books as apocryphal.⁴⁸ In 1527 Peter Quentel published an edition of the Latin Bible under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cologne. This edition followed the Vulgate

Innocentii et Gelasii decreta, et denique definitum a sanctis patribus librorum catalogum respuit, aut in exponendis scripturis non pascit hoedos suos juxta tabernacula pastorum, sed fodit sibi cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas: et spretis orthodoxorum patrum vestigiis, proprii spiritus iudicium sequitur: is veluti schismaticus et haereseon omnium inceptor et fautor tanta temeritate reprimatur," *ibid.*, cols. 1164 E - 1165 A.

⁴⁶*Supra*, pp. 73-75.

⁴⁷"Libri Apocryphi, sive non Canonici, qui nusquam apud Hebraeos extant," cited and described by Henry H. Howorth, "The Bible Canon of the Reformation. VII," *International Journal of Apocrypha*, Series VII, No. 27 (1911), 67.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

order of books, and its Old Testament included III and IV Esdras, III Macca-bees, and the Prayer of Manasseh as well as the Septuagint additions. Although these books were not called apocrypha, several of them contain a marginal note such as "This is not in Hebrew," or "These are not canonical or held by the Jews," or simply "This is not canonical."⁴⁹

Still more remarkable in many ways was the Bible issued in 1528 in Lyons by the well-known Dominican theologian, Sanctes Pagninus.⁵⁰ This edition contained commendatory letters from Popes Adrian VI and Clement VII and was dedicated to the latter. It was the first Latin version in modern times translated exclusively from the original Hebrew and Greek. After listing the books in the Hebrew canon, the table of contents continued with the following heading: "Here follow the books which are not in Hebrew, which are called hagiographa, that is, holy writings."⁵¹ In the text, the so-called hagiographa were separated from the other Old Testament books and Jerome's prefaces were included. Neither III and IV Esdras, the additions to Esther and Daniel, the Prayer of Manasseh, nor III Macca-bees were printed, thereby eliminating more books from the Old Testament than any of the Reformers were to do. This edition exerted considerable influence on later editions, including the English

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 68. See also T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, compilers, Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society, II 3 (London: The Bible House, 1911), 924, where Quentel's dependence on Osiander's 1522 edition is pointed out.

⁵⁰Sanctes Pagninus, Biblia. Utriusque instrumenti nova translatio (Lugduni: Antonius du Ruy, 1528). Described in Darlow and Moule, II 3, 924-925, no. 6108.

⁵¹"Sequuntur modo libri qui non sunt in hebraeo, qui hagiographi dicuntur hoc est sancta scripta," ibid., n.p.

Bibles.⁵²

In 1528 Lefèvre's translation of the Pentateuch appeared, and in 1530 the whole Bible followed. This edition, while following the Vulgate order of books, reflected Lefèvre's views on canonicity.⁵³ He notes that the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament are called "Apocrypha, which means that their author is unknown." Such books, he notes, "are not found in Hebrew and are not canonical books." Nevertheless, "on account of the good doctrine and prophecy found in them, they are received and approved by the church."⁵⁴ Similar critical tendencies were also evident in the Bibles published in Lyons in 1528 and 1532 by Roman Catholic Robert Stephanus.⁵⁵

It was between 1529 and 1534 that Cardinal Cajetan published many of his Bible commentaries, in which he set forth his negative judgment on the full canonical status of the Old Testament apocrypha and five of the New Testament antilegomena. His views were discussed and condemned by the theological faculty of Paris between 1532 and 1534.⁵⁶ But Cajetan's

⁵²Darlow and Moule, II 3, 925, state that this edition was the first printed Latin Bible in which the apocryphal books were separated from the rest of the Old Testament.

For a discussion of the influence of this Bible, see Joseph Gauthier, "Sanctes Pagninus, O.P.," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VII (April, 1945), 175-190.

⁵³Supra, p. 65, n. 19.

⁵⁴"Parquoy entre tous les livres dessus dictz aucuns sont que lon ne trouve pas en Hebrieu ou qui ne sont point livres Canoniques; lesquels toutefois pour la bonne doctrine et Prophetie q'est trouves en euls sont receus et approuvez de leglise. . . . Et sont recents livres appelez Apocryphes, cest a dire desquels lautheur est incongneu," cited in Henry H. Howorth, "The Bible Canon of the Reformation. X.," International Journal of Apocrypha, Series IX, No. 33 (1913), 37.

⁵⁵Darlow and Moule, II 3, 925-927, nos. 6109 and 6112. Stephanus later became a Protestant and published works by the later Swiss reformers.

⁵⁶Supra, pp. 85-96.

ascription of secondary authority to certain Old Testament books was adopted in the thorough and scholarly treatment of the authority of Scripture published in 1533 by John Driedo of Louvain.⁵⁷ Driedo's work, which endeavored to demonstrate the insufficiency of the Protestant appeal to Scripture alone, exerted considerable influence on other theologians, such as Pighius, Cano, and Bellarmine, as well as on the deliberations at the Council of Trent.⁵⁸ Driedo deals with the canon most explicitly in books one and four of his four-part work.

At the very beginning of his treatment, Driedo states his fundamental criterion of canonicity: the canonical writings are those which were accepted by Christ, the apostles and the primitive church and passed on by their successors down to the present day.⁵⁹ Driedo stressed particularly the testimony of the primitive church, for its authority is greater than that of the present church in such matters.⁶⁰ No discrepancy exists between the present and ancient church, however, for the present church professes

⁵⁷John Driedo, De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus (Editio recognita; Louvain: Bartholomaeus Gravius, 1543). We have used the copy in the Case Memorial Library, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut.

⁵⁸John L. Murphy, The Notion of Tradition in John Driedo, *Dissertatio ad Lauream in Facultate Theologica Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae* (Milwaukee: The Seraphic Press, 1959), pp. 6-8.

⁵⁹"Sunt enim qua apostoli a Christo, et eccelsiae primitivae ab apostolis, et caeterae exinde ecclesiae per universum orbem ab ecclesiis secundum seriem successionis antiquioribus, acceperunt," Driedo, p. I b.

⁶⁰"ad primitivam apostolorum ecclesiam, quae in docendis et tradendis Christianae fidei mysteriis atque doctrinis, maioris erat autoritatis, quam ecclesia quae nunc est," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXVIII a. See also p. CCLXXVII b: "Ecclesia tamen primitiva propter collegium apostolorum, ad tradendam novam fidei doctrinam maioris erat gratiae, maiorisque autoritatis, quam ecclesia quae nunc est."

nothing other than what the ancient church has passed on.⁶¹ The testimony passed on successively from the ancient to the present church is certain and reliable because of the Spirit's presence in the church.⁶² Applied to the Old Testament, Driedo's criterion means that "we have the canon of Old Testament Scriptures from the testimony of the Jews."⁶³ It was especially the Spirit's guidance of Ezra that assured the preservation of the genuine Old Testament books, but the testimony of Christ and the apostles also approved his judgment.⁶⁴

Driedo's principle meant that the twenty-two book canon of the Jews has primary authority in the Old Testament. After a lengthy and learned discussion of the authorship and contents of the various Old Testament books, Driedo notes that the authority of such books as Judith, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and I Maccabees "is not sufficient for corroborating the assertions of faith, although they are held to be true and holy."⁶⁵ Driedo adds that the ancient church did not universally approve the

⁶¹"Nam doctrinam fidei praesentis ecclesiae intelligimus esse doctrinam illius ecclesiae, quae spiritu fidei continuata est praecedentibus Christi ecclesiis, usque ad primitivam apostolorum ecclesiam," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXVIII a. See also p. II a: "Demonstramus itaque scripturam esse divinam et canonicam per testimonium ecclesiae: non illius solius quae nunc est, sed intellectae secundum successiones ecclesiarum, seriemque ipsorum patrum ab initio ad haec usque tempora sibi succedentium."

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. III a.

⁶³"Quemadmodum et canonem scripturarum veteris testamenti ex traditione habemus Hebraeorum," *ibid.*, p. III b.

⁶⁴"quod Esdra spiritu Dei plenus, post captam Hierosolimam et instaurationem templi, scripturas sacras dispersas, vixque Babylonico igne superstites, eodem spiritu quo ante scriptae fuerant restituit, aliasque literas Hebraicas, quibus nunc utimur, repperit. . . .Christus atque Apostoli approbarunt tamquam divinum et Dei spiritu aeditum," *ibid.*, p. III b.

⁶⁵"quorum autoritas, ad assertiones fidei corroborandas, non sic est idonea, quamvis habeantur vera et sancta," *ibid.*, pp. XXI a-b.

negative judgment of the Jews with regard to such books as II Maccabees, III and IV Esdras, the Hymn of the Three Children, Bel and the Dragon, and Susannah. The books not in the Hebrew canon are read with reverence and are neither rejected nor condemned, but the church "does not receive them as having equal authority to the canonical scriptures,"⁶⁶ even though she "honors and commends them among the divine books."⁶⁷ For Driedo, these writings constitute a fourth order of Old Testament books.⁶⁸ Their authority is inferior to the other books, particularly "for confirming the faith against the Jews," but they are nevertheless regarded "as books written by the divine Spirit."⁶⁹ As such, their authority is "to be preferred to all other authors in the Christian school."⁷⁰

In the New Testament, Driedo affirms that the church has never honored or commended any other Gospels or apostolic epistles as divine and canonical except those which are now in the canon.⁷¹ But he is well

⁶⁶"Ecclesia . . . easdem pia fide legit, et non prorsus reicit, non contemnit, tametsi non pari authoritate recipiat illos cum scripturis canonicis," *ibid.*, p. XXI b.

⁶⁷"Ecclesia Christi inter divinos libros honorat et praedicat," *ibid.*, p. XXII b.

⁶⁸"Ex quibus sequitur quod quartus est apud nos ordo veteris testamenti eorum librorum, quos Hebraei in suum canonem non recipientes inter apocrypha supputant, quos Christiana ecclesia inter divinos libros honorat, ac praedicat," *ibid.*, p. XXIII a.

⁶⁹"Respondeo quod huiusmodi libri tametsi non sint idonei ad confirmandam fidem contra Iudaeos, qui illos extra canonem locant, utique tamen in Christianorum ecclesiis habentur tanquam libri divino spiritu aediti," *ibid.*, p. XXIII b.

⁷⁰"Et huius quarti ordinis libros non esse tam ample authoritatis, quam caeterorum ordinum, eosdem tamen in Christianorum schola caeteris omnibus tractoribus antependendos," *ibid.*, p. XXV b.

⁷¹"ecclesiam ab initio non habuisse unquam nec alia evangelia, nec alias apostolorum epistolas, et scripturas tanquam divinas et canonicas,

aware of the early doubts attending the antilegomena:

These books were indeed received in former times by the consensus of the whole church, but not without contradiction. But in the beginning, the whole church did not know them in the same way as it did the other scriptures. This explains the fact that many eminent ecclesiastical writers did not employ testimonies from such scriptures.⁷²

The antilegomena, however, were known and accepted as canonical at an early date, as several ancient writers reveal. Such books nevertheless constitute a separate order within the New Testament because "they were not known to all churches from the beginning." But, Driedo continues, "since these books have been accepted in the catholic church without controversy for a thousand years already, there can now be no uncertainty."⁷³

Driedo attacks the notion that uncertain authorship alone renders a book non-canonical. It is more important to believe that the Holy Spirit is its author,⁷⁴ and that it was "formerly received by the whole church of faithful people as a book written by the Holy Spirit diligently preserved by succeeding churches, and continuously handed down to us."⁷⁵

praeter has quas nunc in canone testamenti novi, honorat et praedicat tota Christianorum schola," *ibid.*, p. XV b.

⁷²"Haec iam olim consensu totius ecclesiae fuerunt quidem recepta, sed non sine contradictione, quae non ab initio, quemadmodum aliae scripturae, ad notitiam totius ecclesiae pervenerunt. Cuius indicium hoc est, quod multi percelebres ecclesiastici scriptores non legunt usi fuisse testimoniis ex huiusmodi scripturis," *ibid.*, p. XVI a.

⁷³"quia non ab initio innotuerant omnibus ecclesiis. . . .De quibus iam ante mille annos sine controversia receptis in ecclesia catholica, non potest nunc ulla esse dubitatio," *ibid.*, p. XXVI a.

⁷⁴"Qui aestimat aut canonicum librum aut scripturae testimonium, alterius quod sit authoris esse, pernitiōse non fallitur, quin spiritus sanctus esse illius author fideliter creditur," *ibid.*, p. XXII a.

⁷⁵"ex supra dictis manifestum est non oportere in canone divinarum scripturarum omnino certum esse cuius vel authoris, vel collectoris sive unius sive plurium, sit unus aut alter liber in eodem canone designatus,

The book of Job and many of the Psalms are of uncertain authorship, but are nevertheless received as canonical by the church. To be sure, neither custom, nor time, nor the tacit permission of the church can make a book divine. The epistle of James, for example, had divine authority from the beginning, but this was not recognized by all the early churches. But the church's awareness has increased with time, so that what was at first uncertain has now become clear.⁷⁶ Moreover, we should be certain that other writings included by some of the ancients in the canon do not belong there, for such books lack corroborative testimony from the apostolic age to our own time.⁷⁷ Thus we can be sure that the Council of Carthage listed all the canonical books, and only such books, that were inspired by the Holy Spirit and passed on as divine to the churches of Christ.⁷⁸

Driedo's clear delineation of the canon did not mean that extra-canonical books contain no truth. Apocryphal writings as well as books written by the fathers do not have canonical authority, but may well contain canonical truth.⁷⁹ All canonical truth must be held and believed,

cum sufficiat certum esse quod fuerit olim a tota fidelis populi ecclesia receptus, tanquam liber divino spiritu aeditus, et succedentium ecclesiarum diligentia custoditus, ad nos usque devolutus," *ibid.*, p. XXIV a.

⁷⁶"Erat quidem huius epistolae divina autoritas, sed non omnibus ecclesiis primitiis innotuit, procedente tempora iam declarata et manifestata," *ibid.*, p. XXV a.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. XXVI b.

⁷⁸"Super catalogo igitur voluminum veteris ac novi instrumenti, quae secundum maiorum traditionem per spiritum sanctum conscripta creduntur, restat observanda conclusio ex concilio terito Carthaginensi," *ibid.*

⁷⁹"in apocryphis reperiri aliquam veritatem, sed non esse in eis aliquam canonicam autoritatem. Oportet enim ad vertere, quod aliud significamus dicentes, in apocryphis non esse ullam canonicam autoritatem: aliud aut dicentes, in ipsis non esse ullam canonicam veritatem," *ibid.*, p. CCXLII a.

either because it comes from the canonical scriptures or because it has been held as true by the universal church from the time of the apostles.⁸⁰ Driedo saw no contradiction between ecclesiastical and scriptural teaching,⁸¹ although he emphasized that the church existed prior to Scripture,⁸² and that its authority is broader and pertains to more matters than does the authority of Scripture.⁸³ Moreover, the scriptures "are not made authentic for us without the authority of the testifying church."⁸⁴ From this it follows that "there can be a true testimony of some catholic truth which was not passed on in Holy Scripture, and that there can be holy traditions to be necessarily believed which are not contained in the sacred canonical books now written."⁸⁵ This is what St. Augustine meant when he said that he would not believe the Gospel without the authority of the church. However,

⁸⁰"vel ex scripturis canonicis sic esse, vel universalem ecclesiam ab initio apostolorum sic tenuisse et credidisse, ad circo tenendum est tanquam fidei, et de canonica Christianae religionis sententia," *ibid.*

⁸¹"Ex his patet primo, quod quaerere, an ecclesiae catholicae auctoritas sit prior aut maior auctoritate scripturae, est idem ac si quaeretur, an auctoritas personae testimonium dantis, maior sit suo testimonio," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXIX a. See also p. CCLXXIX b: "Idcirco scriptura sacra et ecclesia, non possunt inter se esse contraria."

⁸²"Sciendum est igitur quod sacra scriptura est testimonium ecclesiae, ex spiritu sancto testificantis, et idcirco ipsa scriptura evangelii posterior est ecclesia," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXVII b.

⁸³"latior et ad plura sit ecclesiae catholicae quam scripturae auctoritas," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXIX a.

⁸⁴"Manifestum est igitur Christi ecclesiam esse antiquiorem scripturis apostolicis atque evangeliorum libris, easdemque scripturas non esse factas nobis authenticas sine auctoritate ecclesiae testificantis," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXIX b.

⁸⁵"Ab ecclesia posse esse alicuius catholicae veritatis verum testimonium, quod nusquam in scriptura sacra est traditum, et posse esse traditiones sanctas ex necessitate credendas, quae in sacris libris canonicis iam aeditis non continentur," *ibid.*

Augustine, like Driedo, did not refer primarily to the "church which now is" when speaking of ecclesiastical authority, but rather to the "primitive church" whose testimony has continued from the beginning of the Christian faith until now.⁸⁶ Thus Driedo's chief criterion of canonicity, as of all catholic truth, is the testimony of this church. So great is the authority of this church that the distinction between canonical and non-canonical scripture is far less crucial for Driedo than it was for the reformers.

That books formerly questioned may no longer be doubted is strongly emphasized by Driedo's Spanish contemporary and a later participant at the Council of Trent, Alfonso de Castro, in his 1534 book against heresies.⁸⁷ De Castro first suggests that one can learn which books are canonical by reading the list of books promulgated by the fourth century Council of Laodicea. The heretic likes this list, de Castro suggests, because "many books are omitted there which are frequently considered to be canonical."⁸⁸ According to de Castro, a favorite device of heretics is to challenge the canonicity of books that may be used against them.⁸⁹ But a book once doubted must not be doubted forever; if that were so, the church could never be certain about anything. No, the church becomes wiser as it grows older: "there are many things that we know now which

⁸⁶"Intelligit de ecclesia catholica, quae fuit ab initio Christianae fidei secundum seriem successionis episcoporum crescens ad haec usque tempora," *ibid.*, p. CCLXXVIII b.

⁸⁷Alfonso de Castro, *Adversus omnes haereses libri quatuordecim*, ab autore ipso recognitum (Coloniae: Ex officina Melchioris Novesiani, 1549).

⁸⁸"cum videat plerosque scripturae sacrae ibi omitti, qui passim pro canonicis habentur," *ibid.*, p. 3 a.

⁸⁹"Nam et hoc maxime cupiunt haeretici, ut omnes quot potuerint libri a canone auferantur, neque in catalogo sacrorum voluminum connumerentur," *ibid.*

were either doubted or completely unknown to the first fathers."⁹⁰ When it discovers its new knowledge of certain things, "the Church, instructed by the Holy Spirit, issues a definition. When this definition is given, one may not doubt that which was previously doubtful."⁹¹ The decision of the Council of Carthage, the decree of Innocent I, and the witness of Augustine all prove that the church defined the canon long ago, thereby making it impossible for the later church to entertain doubts about certain books. On that account, Luther's rejection of James is wrong, for "the epistle of the Apostle James if found in the catalog of canonical books."⁹² The final criterion of truth is the church: "We therefore say that the church is to be obeyed in all things which are to be believed or done, even if the authority of Scripture is lacking, although this is impossible because the Scriptures themselves attribute this authority to it."⁹³

Luther and the reformers were not the only ones to be attacked for their canonical positions. In 1535, the year after Cajetan's death, his position on a number of points, including the canon, was strenuously attacked by Ambrosius Catharinus.⁹⁴ In general, Catharinus faults

⁹⁰"multa nunc sciamus, quae a primis patribus aut dubitata, aut prorsus ignorata fuerunt," ibid., p. 3 b.

⁹¹"sed ex nova illarum rerum scientia, quibus compertis, Ecclesia a spiritu sancto edocta definit. Qua definitione data, non licebit dubitare, de quo antea licebat," ibid.

⁹²"ex pluribus conciliorum decretis ostendimus eam Iacobi Apostoli epistolam in catalogo librorum canonicorum esse locatam," ibid., p. 280 b.

⁹³"Dicamus ergo in omnibus quae aut credenda aut agenda sunt, Ecclesiam esse obediendum, etiam si scripturae auctoritas desit, quamvis haec ei deesse non possit, quum hanc ei auctoritatem ipsaemet scripturae tribuant," ibid., p. 10 b.

⁹⁴Ambrosius Catharinus, Annotationes in excerpta quaedam de commentariis Reverendissimi Cardinalis Caietani S. Xisti, dogmata (Paris: Simon

Cajetan's submission to Jerome, but points out that he has misunderstood Jerome in many places. He reminds his readers that most of the early fathers and councils and, more recently, the Paris theological faculty and the Council of Sens, did not share Cajetan's views. He suggests that many of Cajetan's positions are suspiciously similar to the heretical views of Luther, and likens his own attack on Cajetan to the earlier condemnation of Julian the Apostate by "holy men."⁹⁵ Catharinus then takes up various objections to the questioned books, and answers them by appealing to the previous decisions of the church.⁹⁶ At the end of his book Catharinus lists two hundred and eight errors contained in Cajetan's commentaries.⁹⁷

The reformers' canonical theories were again attacked by Albert Pighius in 1538.⁹⁸ Pighius complains about those who divide the canonical books into classes and deny authorship to men who have been acknowledged

Colinaeus, 1535). A somewhat revised and milder version of this work was published in 1542.

For a general discussion of Catharinus' life and work including his Annotationes against Cajetan, see Friedrich Lauchert, Die italienischen literarischen Gegner Luthers, VIII. Band in Erläuterungen und Ergänzungen zu Janssens Geschichte des deutschen Volkes, herausgegeben von Ludwig von Pastor (Freiburg im Bresgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1912), pp. 30-133, especially pp. 60-66; Josef Schweizer, Ambrosius Catharinus Politus, Sein Leben und seine Schriften (Münster: Aschendorff Buchdruckerei, 1909), especially pp. 69-74; and Jacobus Quetif and Jacobus Echard, Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Recensiti (Paris: Christophorus Ballard et Nicolaus Simart, 1721), II, 144-151, especially 145.

⁹⁵Annotationes, p. 9.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 20 ff. for the New Testament antilegomena, and 46 ff. for the Old Testament deuterocanonical writings.

⁹⁷See infra, pp. 209-216, for a discussion of Catharinus's treatment of the canon based on his later and more systematic treatment of 1552.

⁹⁸Albertus Pighius, Hierarchiae Ecclesiasticae Assertio, ab ipso authore sub mortem diligenter recognita (Coloniae: Apud Iohannem Birckmannum, 1558).

as authors for over a thousand years. For Erasmus, "one book of canonical scripture has more weight than another, even though he does not question its canonicity." Luther attacks James, but not II Peter, which is highly inconsistent, "for in this one epistle it very evidently follows that if it is not Peter's, it cannot be canonical." If the author, who claims to have been on the mount of transfiguration with Jesus, were not Peter, this would impute error to Holy Scripture, and this is manifestly impossible.⁹⁹ Nor may anyone challenge the authority of the Maccabean books simply because they are not found in the Hebrew canon, for "the authority of the church of Christ, on which the authority of all scripture depends for us, has indeed attributed unquestioned authority to them."¹⁰⁰ Pighius asks: "For what we see to be held and believed by the church in the whole world, who can doubt that this is the judgment of the church?"¹⁰¹ He reminds the reader that already the Council of Carthage, where Augustine was present, decided which books were canonical. Pighius explains that there is no other way of knowing which Scriptures are canonical and divine except from the "testimony of the church understood according to the succession of fathers and bishops from the beginning to this present time."¹⁰²

⁹⁹"Ita Erasmo plus ponderis habet unus quam alius canonicae scripturae liber, etiam quem nihil dubitat esse de canone. . . . Nam in una hac epistola evidentissime sequitur, si Petri non sit, canonicam esse non posse," *ibid.*, p. 77 b.

¹⁰⁰"Neque est quod auctoritatem librorum Machabeorum hic quisquam in dubium revocet, eo quod reiiciantur ab Hebraeorum canone. Indubiam siquidem illis auctoritatem tribuit ecclesiae Christi auctoritas, unde scripturarum omnium auctoritatem nobis dependere," *ibid.*

¹⁰¹"Quod enim toto orbe terrarum videmus ecclesiam tenere et credere, qui dubitari potest, hoc esse ecclesiae iudicium?", *ibid.*, p. 78 a.

¹⁰²"testimonium ecclesiae intellectae secundum successionem ab initio patrum et episcoporum ad haec usque tempora," *ibid.*, p. 5 b.

We accept the Pentateuch only on the basis of the "one authority of ecclesiastical tradition," and Mark and Luke have authority only "on account of the church of the apostles."¹⁰³ The church's principle is that "we receive and believe our Scriptures on account of the church, not contrary to the church on account of the Scriptures."¹⁰⁴

Another Roman Catholic treatment of the canon appeared in the 1543 polemical writing of John Cochlaeus.¹⁰⁵ Although directed to Henry Bullinger, this tract also criticized the positions of Luther and Brunfels. Cochlaeus attacked the reformers' judgments on individual books only in passing, preferring to criticize their criteria of canonicity. He condemns the reformers for paying more attention to Jews and Hebraists than to the fathers of the church. The church has the "sense of Christ," while the Jews have rejected the Messiah, the Christian faith, and the New Testament, and for fifteen hundred years "have corrupted the Bible with points, distinctions, conjugations, constructions, and significations." Therefore, he chides Bullinger,

In all the novelties of your Hebraists and new translators, nothing contrary to the ancient church and the exposition of the holy fathers is to be believed. For the pledge of truth remains to eternity among the church, not among the enemies of the church.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³"una ecclesiasticae traditionis autoritate," ibid., p. 6 b;
 "propter illam apostolorum ecclesiam," ibid., p. 9 a.

¹⁰⁴"nos recipimus, credimusque, scripturis nostris propter ecclesiam, non contra ecclesiam propter scripturas," ibid., p. 11 a.

¹⁰⁵Johann Cochlaeus, De canonicae scripturae et Catholicae Ecclesiae Autoritate ad Henricum Bullingerum Libellus (Ingolstadt: Officina Alexandri Weissenborn, 1543). Microfilm copy obtained from the Foundation on Reformation Research, St. Louis, Mo.

¹⁰⁶"Vobis hebreistis et novis translatoribus nihil contra antiquum Ecclesiae textum et sanctorum patrum expositionem credendum esse in omnibus novitatibus vestris. Quia sponsus veritatis apud Ecclesiam, non apud Ecclesiae hostes, manet in aeternum," ibid., p. E la.

Discussing the reformers' claim to hold only such truths as come from Scripture, Cochlaeus asks where they have derived their judgments on the canon.

But tell me, I ask, from which Scriptures was that judgment formed? For, which Scripture teaches that only twenty-two books are to be held as canonical? Or from which Scripture will you prove that the book of Esther is better than the book of Judith or Tobit, and is or should be received among the canonical books?¹⁰⁷

"There are many things of that kind," Cochlaeus continues, "which we hold from the authority of the church, and not from the Scriptures,"¹⁰⁸ and even Jerome followed this principle in approving the Hebrew canon. He condemns those heretics "who rashly usurp for themselves the authority to judge most of the books of Sacred Scripture which the whole church of Christ has held to be canonical for centuries, if we believe Augustine and the ancient councils as we ought to."¹⁰⁹

The authority of church and Scripture is not contradictory, Cochlaeus maintains, but the church "is more powerful than the synagog and the judgment of heretics" in determining which Scriptures are authentic and divine.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷"Sed dic mihi quaeso, ex quibusnam scripturis formatum fuerit illud iudicium? Quae enim scriptura praecipit, tantum xxii libros habendos esse canonicos? Aut qua ex scriptura probabis, librum Hester potius quam librum Iudith aut Tobiae, inter Canonicos libros receptum aut recipiendum esse?", *ibid.*, p. A 4b.

¹⁰⁸"Haec et id genus multa non ex scripturis, sed ex Ecclesiae autoritate habemus, si Hieronymi in Galeato principio sententiam sequamus, qui Hebraeorum Canonem approbat," *ibid.*, p. B 1a.

¹⁰⁹"qui temere usurpant sibi auctoritatem iudicandi de plaerisque sacrae scripturae libris, quos tot saeculis pro Canonicis tota habuit (si Augustino et Concillis antiquis credimus ut debemus) Ecclesia Christi," *ibid.*, p. B 1b.

¹¹⁰"et de scripturis, quae nam autentice sint et divinitus traditae, ecclesiae potius quam synagogae, et haereticorum iudicium, sequimur et approbamus," *ibid.*, p. B 3a.

We certainly do not say that the authority of the church is greater or more powerful than that of the Gospel or of any canonical writing, but with you we unanimously believe that all Holy Scripture has its authority, certitude, and infallible truth from heaven and from the Holy Spirit (who is certainly more powerful and greater than the church), and we anathematize all who feel otherwise.¹¹¹

But the church is the pillar and foundation of truth, and alone able to determine which writings are canonical. For she possesses the Holy Spirit and the promise to be guided into all truth.

The church's testimonies about Christ and his Gospel are not from men or according to men, but from God the Holy Spirit who was given to her that he might teach her all truth. . . .The authority of the church pertaining to the Scriptures is therefore not to be condemned or rejected, but to be made especially great and to be held as a sacred anchor.¹¹²

The church's role in authenticating Scripture, however, is that of a witness rather than that of an author or judge.¹¹³

In spite of their different approaches and accents, the pre-Tridentine discussions of the canon share certain general characteristics. Most of them were flatly opposed to the humanistic and reformational critique of the canon. The latter was often regarded as individualistic, subjective, and capricious. Challenging the authority of a biblical book was regarded as a typical mark of heresy. Following the norm of the Hebrew canon was

¹¹¹"Nos certe non dicimus, potiolem et maiorem esse Ecclesiae quam Evangelii aut Canonicae cuiuslibet scripturae auctoritatem, sed tecum unanimiter credimus, omnem scripturam sacram, suam e caelo et a spiritu sancto (qui utique potior et maior est quam Ecclesia) habere auctoritatem, certitudinem et infallibilem veritatem, et Anathema dicimus omnibus qui aliter sentiunt," *ibid.*, p. B 3b.

¹¹²"Ecclesiae igitur testimonia de Christo et eius Evangelio, non ab hominibus, aut secundum homines sunt, sed a Deo, spiritu sancto, qui datus est ei, ut doceat ipsam omnem veritatem. . . .Non igitur contemnenda aut reiicienda est Ecclesiae auctoritas circa scripturas, sed magna facienda prorsus, et velut sacra ancora habenda," *ibid.*, p. C 3a.

¹¹³"Evangelium habere auctoritatem ab ecclesia, non velut ab autore aut iudice, . . .sed veluti a teste et commendante," *ibid.*, p. B 3b.

sometimes seen as the uncritical acceptance of the falsified testimony of the enemies of Christ and his church. The reformers' challenge of James and Maccabees was associated with their rejection of doctrines allegedly taught in these books. Most serious of all was the failure of such criticism to recognize that only the authority of the church can settle the question of canonicity. In emphasizing the latter point, the theologians cited especially Augustine and the third Council of Carthage, but not the more recent Council of Florence. A few held that distinctions of authority within the canon were compatible with the previous decisions and tradition of the church. While hesitating to pit the Scriptures against the church, all were agreed in assigning the church a certain pre-eminence above the Scripture, and in maintaining that the source of ecclesiastical authority is the Holy Spirit who was given to the church to guide it into all truth. Some sought to find this truth primarily in the judgment of the early church, while others clearly reckoned with the possibility that the church, under the Spirit, has experienced a gradual progression in the knowledge of the truth. But in spite of the objections of theologians, the theories of Erasmus and Cajetan had also found acceptance within some quarters of the church.

The Council of Trent

After the Council of Trent convened on December 13, 1545, two sessions were devoted to the mode of procedure and the promulgation of the Symbolum Fidei. On February 8, 1546, the council participants began the discussion that was to eventuate in the dogmatic decree on the sacred books and apostolic traditions promulgated in the fourth session on April 8,

1546.¹¹⁴ For the sake of orderly procedure, the council fathers were divided into three "classes" or "particular congregations," each one presided over by one of Pope Paul III's three legates, Cardinal Marcello Cervini of Santa Croce, Cardinal Giovanni del Monte of Palestrina, and Cardinal Reginald Pole of Cosmedin, England.¹¹⁵ Plenary meetings of the three classes, known as "general congregations," were also held to discuss and act upon the findings of the classes prior to the promulgation of a given decree in a "session." The official list of those present at the fourth session contains two cardinals, Cristoforo Madruzzo of Trent and Pedro Pacheco of Jaen, eight archbishops, forty-two bishops and one bishop's

¹¹⁴The primary sources for the proceedings of the Council of Trent are in Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, Actorum, Epistularum, Tractarum Nova Collectio, edidit Societas Goerresiana (Editio secunda sterotypa; Friburgi in Brisgoviae: Ex aede et sumptibus Herder, 1963-1966). Hereafter cited as CT. The following volumes contain material on the canon:

Stephanus Eheses, editor, Concilii Tridentini Actorum pars altera, CT, Tomus V. This volume contains the minutes of the council recorded by Angelo Massarelli, private secretary to Cervini and later official secretary of the council.

Sebastianus Merkle, editor, Concilii Tridentini Diariorum pars prima, CT, Tomus I. Both the commentary of Severoli, pp. 1-147, and the second and third diaries of Massarelli, pp. 405-626, contain material on our subject.

Godofredus Buschbell, editor, Concilii Tridentini Epistularum pars prima, CT, Tomus X. Of significance for the canon discussion are letters 294, 298, and 303 by the papal legates, pp. 373-374, 377-379, and 382-386.

Vincentius Schweitzer, editor, Concilii Tridentini Tractatum pars prior, CT, Tomus XII. Treatises 61-64, pp. 473-509, deal with the canon.

The following secondary treatments are also useful: Petrus G. Duncker, "De Singulis S. Scripturae Libris Controversis in Concilio Tridentino," in Miscellanea Biblica et Orientalia, R. P. Athanasio Miller O.S.B. oblata, cura Adalberti Metzinger, Studia Anselmiana, fasciculus xxvii-xxviii (Roma: Herder, 1951), pp. 66-93; Peter G. Duncker, "The Canon of the Old Testament at the Council of Trent," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XV (1953), 277-299; and Albert Maichle, Der Kanon der biblischen Bücher und das Konzil von Trient, Freiburger Theologische Studien, XXXIII (Freiburg: Herder & Co., 1929).

¹¹⁵Del Monte later succeeded Paul III as Pope Julius III, and Cervini followed him as Pope Marcellus II.

proxy, three abbots who together had one vote, and four generals of the principal religious orders.¹¹⁶ In addition, a number of theologians were present as advisers to the fathers. One of the major subjects discussed during the two-month debate prior to the fourth session was the canon of Holy Scripture. In the following paragraphs, we shall review the progress of the discussion on the canon, analyze the four treatises on the subject prepared by council participants, and discuss that portion of the decree that deals with the biblical canon.

On February 7, the papal legates wrote that on the following day they would propose to the general congregation that the next action of the council should be the determination of the canonical books. They listed three reasons for this proposal: Scripture is the necessary basis of all other dogmatic questions, many authentic books had been questioned, and the question would naturally lead to a discussion of ecclesiastical tradition.¹¹⁷ On the following day, del Monte proposed to the general congregation that they should now declare

which scriptures are canonical and which are not, that all may know which weapons we wish to employ against our opponents, and that our own people may be strengthened, some of whom are so weak and vacillating that they do not even fully believe the Gospels in all their parts.¹¹⁸

Cardinal Cervini added that it had been customary at previous councils

¹¹⁶CT, V, 101-102.

¹¹⁷CT, X, 373, no. 294. The purpose of the discussion on the canon is also reflected in the closing words of the decree, see *infra*, pp. 199-200.

¹¹⁸"que scripture sint canonice, et que non. Nam si hoc fecerimus, scient omnes, quibus armis uti velimus contra adversarios nostra, et nostri, quorum aliqui debiles sunt et adeo titubantes, ut iam nec evangeliiis quidem ubique plenam fidem adhibeant, confirmabuntur," CT, I, 28, 34-37.

to discuss the Scriptures after establishing the Symbolum Fidei.

Cardinal Pacheco observed that what had been approved by so many councils and fathers could not be a matter of genuine controversy, and suggested that previous testimonies be gathered and approved without hesitation. However, the general of the Servites, Augustine Bonucci, considered the question superfluous, inasmuch as "there is no controversy on the Holy Scriptures between us and the Lutherans." Although some Lutherans deny the Pauline authorship of Romans and the Jacobean authorship of James, he observed, they "nevertheless approve them as dictated by the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁹ His viewpoint was not accepted, and it was agreed to follow del Monte's suggestion.

On February 11, the following proposal was laid before each of the classes:

That the books of Holy Scripture, as well as the way and manner in which they are to be received, be accepted in the next session, and that it be determined whether there should first be some inquiry or examination by theologians selected by the papal legates, so that an answer can be given to the arguments of the adversaries.¹²⁰

In his class, Cardinal Cervini spoke at some length on his understanding of the problem. He first stressed the importance of determining the canon of sacred books, "from which, as from first principles, every act and conclusion of this synod ought to originate in order to defend the truth and refute the opponents."¹²¹ He pointed out that some heretics, both ancient

¹¹⁹"in scripturis sanctis nulla est inter nos et Luteranos controversia, et quamvis plerique ex ipsis epistolam Pauli ad Romanos non esse Pauli, et alteram Iacobi eius non esse contendunt, probant tamen ipsas ut a spiritu sancto dictatas," ibid., p. 29, 18-21. The reference to Romans is probably a scribal error for Hebrews; cf. ibid., notes 4 and 5.

¹²⁰CT, V, 4, 4-6.

¹²¹"a quibus uti a primis principiis omnis dictae synodi actio et conclusio oriri debeat, tum ad veritatem defendendam, tum ad errores adversariorum propulsandos," ibid., p. 4, 21-23.

and modern, as well as "some of our own," have questioned whether certain books are to be received as "sacred and canonical."¹²² Cervini then attempted to answer such criticisms of the canon by referring to the Apostolic Canons; the Councils of Laodicea, Carthage, and Florence; such fathers as Jerome, Augustine, and Athanasius; and popes Innocent I and Gelasius.¹²³ At the close of his remarks, Cervini placed two questions before his class: Should the books be accepted "purely and simply" as they were approved in the Council of Florence, or should a distinction be made between those books which lay the foundation of faith and those which are canonical but not of equal authority with the former? Should the approval be given in a simple way, or should the arguments for and against the disputed books also be presented?¹²⁴

The cardinal's questions received different answers. A conservative group favored an unconditional reception of the traditional canon without any further attempt at critical investigation. They reasoned that the question had already been sufficiently discussed by John Cochlaeus and others, and that what had been decided by other councils was not open to discussion.¹²⁵ Others felt that the books should be accepted without

¹²²Ibid., p. 4, 25-27. He mentioned Cajetan by name, l. 36.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 4-5. For a discussion of the historical errors in Cervini's account, see Ehses' notes, ibid., and Duncker, "De Singulis," pp. 75-80. Cervini particularly valued the third Council of Carthage, noting that it added Judith, Tobit and the Apocalypse to the books approved at Laodicea, "quos libros non ut ab apostolis reiectos et de novo adinventos, sed ut ab ecclesia ab ipsorum apostolorum tempore usque ad illam aetatem unanimes consensu comprobatos," ibid., p. 5, 6-9.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 5, 16-21. Reception of the books "pure et simpliciter" meant "without distinction among the books as to authority and rank," ibid., p. 8, n. 2.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 5, 22-25.

distinction, but that an attempt should be made to discuss the various objections.¹²⁶ A third group, led by Bishop Pietro Bertano of Fano and Girolamo Seripando, general of the Augustinian order, was opposed to a simple listing of the books, and maintained that a distinction should be made between the authority of the various books. They argued:

Some books ought to be accepted as authentic and canonical and as those on which our faith depends, while others ought to be accepted as canonical only in the sense of being suitable for teaching and useful for reading in the churches, just as the Blessed Jerome distinguishes between them.¹²⁷

The acts record that "no one approved this distinction" when Cervini asked for a vote.¹²⁸ In a letter begun that evening, the papal legates reported that each class had agreed to list the books without distinction, just as Gelasius, Innocent I, and the Councils of Carthage and Florence had done. They also reported that it had been decided to ask the theologians to prepare a compendium of solutions to the various objections.¹²⁹

On the following day, February 12, a general congregation discussed progress on the canon question. Del Monte reported that his class favored listing the books without distinctions of authority as had been done by the Council of Florence, but that Cardinal Madruzzo of Trent had objected.¹³⁰ Cervini reported that his class had agreed on the Florentine listing of

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 6, 15-36.

¹²⁷"*alios esse libros, qui ut authentici et canonici et ut a quibus fides nostra dependeat, recipi debeant, alii ut canonici tantum quique ad docendum idonei et ad legendum in ecclesiis utiles sint, prout idem distinguit inter alios B. Hieronymus,*" ibid., p. 7, 12-15.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 7, 16-17.

¹²⁹CT, X, 377, 22-33, no. 298.

¹³⁰CT, I, 30, 13-15 and 31, 7-9; cf. CT, V, 8, 4-6.

books, but had not reached agreement on two questions: whether a distinction of authority should be made between books, and whether or not to include arguments refuting the various criticisms of certain books. On the first question, Cervini noted that the church had not yet decided this point and that many were still concerned about it.¹³¹ The majority favored omitting this question and leaving it undecided for posterity, "just as it was left for us by our holy fathers." Bonucci added: "In those points where Augustine and Jerome disagree among themselves, the synod should not pass judgment because the church has not been accustomed to do so."¹³² Considerable discussion followed on whether or not to include a detailed refutation of objections to various books. Those who favored such a refutation (including Cervini and Pole) argued that it was the only way to put an end to doubts, while those who opposed it (including del Monte) felt that this refutation had already been provided in the books of Eck, Pighius, and Fisher.¹³³ Neither of Cervini's questions received a definite answer on February 12. That night, the legates wrote Rome that the fathers had not yet decided whether to make a distinction between books or whether to publish a refutation of criticisms against various books for the sake of weak persons in the church, but

¹³¹"idque videretur non ab re, quoniam ambiguum est necdum ab ecclesia determinatum," CT, V, 8, 13-14.

¹³²"maioris nihilominus partis sententia praevaluit, ut quaestio huiusmodi omitteretur et relinqueretur, sicuti nobis a sanctis nostris patribus relicta fuit. In qua sententia cum esset R. Generalis Servorum, addidit hanc rationem, ne sc. in iis, in quibus inter se Augustinus et Hieronymus dissentiunt, synodus iudicium suum, quod ecclesia facere non consuevit interponeret," *ibid.*, p. 8, 35-39. Cf. also CT, I, 31, 1: "De librorum vero discrimine, tametsi plures rem utilem, nec minus quidem necessariam iudicarent."

¹³³CT, V, 8, 40-9, 3. Cf. also CT, I, 478, 35-38.

that all had agreed to publish the Florentine list of books.¹³⁴

Cervini's two questions again received extensive discussion in a meeting of the general congregation on February 15. Cardinal Madruzzo of Trent argued that a scholarly refutation was the only way to make an impression on the opponents as well as on the academic world. Pacheco, on the other hand, strongly opposed this because he feared it would lead opponents to feel that the fathers at Trent had entertained doubts about the truth. In order to eliminate future doubts, he suggested that all books be proposed for acceptance "under the penalty of an anathema." He lamented the fact that Cajetan was "one of our own people who was not ashamed to dispute the authority of many of our books and reject them as apocryphal."¹³⁵ The debate became so heated that one delegate, Bishop Sanfelice of Cava, proclaimed that he did not believe the Gospel of John because the church had received it, but because it was John's.¹³⁶ Others questioned whether the Council of Florence had any authority on this matter at all.¹³⁷ When the debate came to an end, three decisions had been reached: One, the decree would include no lengthy discussion of the opposition to various books (twenty-four affirmative votes to sixteen

¹³⁴CT, X, 378, 43-379, 5, no. 298.

¹³⁵"Quamobrem, inquit, ne ulterius ab aliquo de re huiusmodi oriri possit dubitatio, sub pena anatematis probandos omnes libros nostros censerem, et ita nostri quoque, quorum aliqui, et inprimis Caietanus ille noster non erubuit de plurium librorum nostrorum auctoritate disputare et ipsorum aliquos ceu apogrifos refutare," CT, I, 32, 16-21.

¹³⁶Massarelli notes: "Cui hoc esse haereticum responsum est," *ibid.*, p. 480, 36-37.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 480, 38-40. The question of the Florentine list was discussed again, and at greater length, on Feb. 26, *ibid.*, 495, 15-496, 31.

negative);¹³⁸ two, the acceptance of the list should be demanded under the threat of an anathema (twenty-four affirmative votes to fifteen negative);¹³⁹ and, three, no distinction of authority should be made between various books, but all should be received "with the same and equal reverence [aequaliter et pari reverentia]" (twenty-three affirmative votes to fifteen negative).¹⁴⁰

In a letter written the following day, the papal legates reported that almost all agreed that it was unnecessary to make a distinction of authority between various books, that is,

whether in accepting the books, they have accepted them as having equal rank and authority [in pari grado et autorita], or, as Jerome and others say, disparately [in dispari], so that one book would claim greater reliance than another, particularly in the Old Testament.

The following line was crossed out: "although it cannot be denied."¹⁴¹

The legates also reported the divided opinion among the fathers on whether to publish a lengthy refutation of arguments against the books, and announced that the fathers had agreed that "each one should himself study the arguments for and against, and have them studied, and be prepared to give an account if necessary."¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 480, 42-481, 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 32, 42-46; CT, V, 10, 2-5.

¹⁴⁰ The acts state: "Maior itaque pars comprobavit, ut apponerentur haec verba, 'pari pietatis affectu recipimus,' sed nihil decretum," CT, V, 10, 5-6. Massarelli's diary states: "Sententiis inquisitis generaliter suscipiendos pari auctoritate decretum est," CT, I, 481, 4-5. On the discrepancies in the accounts of this vote, see Duncker, "The Canon of the Old Testament," pp. 289-291.

¹⁴¹ CT, X, 382, 28-33, no. 303; see textual apparatus, n. "g."

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 383, 5-8; cf. V, 9, 36; I, 33, 1-5 and 480, 44-48.

This statement by the papal legates no doubt explains the role of four treatises on the canon included among the proceedings of Trent.¹⁴³ They were prepared by Giovanni Calvi, General of the Franciscan Order; Girolamo Seripando, General of the Augustinian Order; Alfonso de Castro, a council theologian in the service of Cardinal Pacheco; and Angelo Pasquali, Bishop of Mottola.¹⁴⁴ In his Defense of the Canonical Books, Calvi, a member of Cardinal Pole's class, distinguished five classes of books. In the first class of homologoumena are those books which have never been questioned by Jews or Christians. This class includes the books of the Hebrew canon in the Old Testament and the twenty unquestioned books of the New Testament. The second class contains those books which were not accepted by all, namely, most of the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament, and the antilegomena of the New Testament. Books of the third class are doubtful, but are numbered in the catalogue of biblical books. Calvi includes Baruch, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Song of the Three Children, the last chapter of Mark, and the Johannine pericope of the adulterous woman in this class. The fourth category comprises those books "which are never found to be received among the canonical books, but which nevertheless are not prohibited reading for education and instruction."¹⁴⁵ In this group Calvi numbers III Esdras and III Maccabees. Finally, Calvi lists in his fifth class a number of writings

¹⁴³This is the suggestion of Maichle, p. 25, n. 72, and p. 77. Duncker, "De Singulis," p. 71, n. 2, states that they could not have been written before Feb. 5. Schweitzer, CT, XII, 473, 483, 497, and 506, dates them simply, "In the month of February or March, 1546."

¹⁴⁴CT, XII, nos. 61-64, 473-509.

¹⁴⁵"qui nunquam inter canonicos inveniuntur recepti, qui tamen non prohibentur legi ad institutionem et instructionem," ibid., p. 473, 9-10.

which have been expressly condemned by the church because of their heretical nature.¹⁴⁶

Calvi does not consider any of the writings in the last two categories to be worthy of consideration for canonical status, but his judgment on the second and third class is more positive. Although books in the second class were not received by all, "the church has chosen to include such books in its canon."¹⁴⁷ That the books and portions of books in the third class are also canonical is proved by their long and continued use in the church's liturgy, for the second Council of Carthage specifically prohibited the use of non-divine books in the liturgy.¹⁴⁸ The argumentation of Calvi's treatise is characterized by the copious citation of church fathers and councils to support his stance, and by an attempt to refute the arguments of those who had challenged the canonicity of books in his second and third classes. Since many critics leaned heavily on the judgment of St. Jerome, Calvi discussed his testimony at some length. He acknowledged that Jerome distinguished between the Hebrew canon and the canon of the church, but insisted that Jerome followed the latter. He explained that those books not included in the Hebrew canon had acquired canonical status in the church through their long and hallowed use, and

¹⁴⁶"omnino non ab ecclesia recepti, quia ab hereticis confecti," *ibid.*, l. 10.

¹⁴⁷"ecclesia tales libros in suum canonem cooptaverit," *ibid.*, ll. 6-7.

¹⁴⁸"celebres sunt decantationes et predicationes in Dei ecclesia. Cum igitur iuxta canonem concilii Carthaginensis nihil debeat legi in ecclesia sub nomine divinarum scripturarum, nisi fuerit inter canonicas scripturas receptum, satis videtur probatum huiusmodi hystorias esse vere divinas et sanctas," *ibid.*, pp. 480, 42-481, 2.

were Jerome alive, he would also acknowledge this.¹⁴⁹ In the New Testament, Calvi defends not only the canonicity, but the apostolic authorship, of the questioned books.¹⁵⁰ For both Testaments, Calvi valued the testimony of the third council of Carthage, which enlarged the canon adopted at the Council of Laodicea. He argued that the omission of certain books in the Laodicean canon does not disprove their canonicity, because such books were not recognized by all to be divine until the later council of Carthage.¹⁵¹ Calvi regarded the ultimate criterion of canonicity to be the authoritative judgment of the church, and clearly maintained that the church's knowledge of canonicity had become progressively more certain.

Seripando, a member of Cervini's class and one of the council's most eminent fathers, reflected a great sympathy for the position of Jerome in his treatise On the Books of Holy Scripture. His treatise is divided into two parts, each one dealing with one of the two Testaments. Seripando attempted to ground his preference for the books in the Hebrew canon by noting which Old Testament books were cited in the New Testament by Christ and the apostles. Eight books in the Hebrew canon are not cited in the New Testament, but nevertheless enjoy full authority; they

¹⁴⁹"dicimus quod, quamquam etate Hieronymi forsan non ab omnibus recipiebantur, tamen nunc, cum omnino acceptandi essent, etiam, si superstes, Hieronymus reciperet propter longiturnitatem usus," *ibid.*, p. 476, 29-31. Calvi's defense of Jerome, *ibid.*, pp. 474, 25-476, 41, rests in part on faulty texts of Jerome's statements, where "hagiographa" had replaced "apocrypha"; see *supra*, p. 31, n. 73.

¹⁵⁰CT, XII, 477-480.

¹⁵¹"Quod igitur omisum fuerat a Laodicensi, suppletum est per Carthaginense. Non enim statim omni ecclesia declaravit, sed pro varietate temporum et necessitate rerum promovetur veritatis cognitio," *ibid.*, p. 475, 6-8.

"are inferior in name only, because none of their testimony is used in the New Testament."¹⁵² The General of the Augustinians then examined statements on canonicity in Jerome, Augustine, Origen, Cyprian, John of Damascus, and the Councils of Laodicea, Carthage, and Florence. As a result of his investigation, Seripando concluded that a firm distinction must be made within the Old Testament. With the exception of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Maccabees, III and IV Esdras, and Baruch, all books of the Old Testament are "canonical and authentic" and "their authority is able to confirm ecclesiastical dogmas."¹⁵³ The excepted books are "canonical and ecclesiastical"; as such they are to be read for the edification of the people, but they are not "authentic," that is, they lack sufficient authority of themselves "for confirming ecclesiastical dogmas."¹⁵⁴

With this distinction between a "canon of faith" and a "canon of morals," Seripando endeavored to resolve the difference between Jerome and Augustine as well as to interpret the meaning of the Florentine and Carthaginian decrees. Augustine was quite justified in listing books of the second rank, for they belong to the larger canon of the church and that is all that the bishop of Hippo, or for that matter, the Council

¹⁵²"Numerantur cum his et alii pariter cum enumeratis auctoritatis, hoc solo nomine inferiores, quod eorum nullum exstat in Novo Testamento usurpatum testimonium," *ibid.*, p. 484, 9-10.

¹⁵³"Libri omnes, qui nunc in Veteris Testamenti canone continentur, tanquam canonici et authentici approbantur, hoc est, quorum auctoritas valeat ad confirmanda dogmata ecclesiastica, praeter libros Tobiae, Iudith, Sapientiae, Ecclesiastici, Maccabaeorum, duos ultimos Esdrae, Baruch," *ibid.*, p. 487, 11-14.

¹⁵⁴"Libros, quos excipimus, tanquam canonici et ecclesiastici approbantur, legendi scilicet ad aedificationem plebis, non autem tanquam authentici, hoc est tanquam sufficientes per se ad confirmanda dogmata ecclesiastica," *ibid.*, ll. 15-17.

of Carthage, intended to say.¹⁵⁵ The same principle must be applied to the Council of Florence, he asserts, for even though that council made no distinction between the two levels of books and regarded all of them as inspired, it said nothing to prevent the historic distinction from being made.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, divine inspiration does not make all books equal, for there are various kinds of inspiration, just as there are different gifts of the same Spirit in other areas; moreover, "all truth, by whomever spoken, is from the Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁷ In fact, Seripando suggests, it would be helpful if the church would add a clarifying comment to the Florentine decree so that the matter would be properly understood. At the very least, everyone ought to be free to have his own opinion on this matter.¹⁵⁸

In the New Testament, Seripando likewise distinguished between books that were never doubted and the antilegomena. Here, however, he made no distinction in rank, and argued at great length for the full canonicity of the antilegomena, using as his witnesses the statements

¹⁵⁵ Augustine's list, for example, contains all books "qui sunt in canone seu fidei seu morum," *ibid.*, ll. 41-43. The third council of Carthage listed together "canonem tam fidei quam morum, nulla facta distinctione, et sic libri illi excepti pertinerent ad canonem morum, reliqui ad canonem fidei," *ibid.*, p. 488, ll. 6-9.

¹⁵⁶ Speaking of both Carthage and Florence, Seripando asserts: "cum hoc in eorum decretis manifesto non appareat, cum praesertim post haec concilia non fuerit id ab omnibus catholicis pro indubitato habitum. . . ." *ibid.*, ll. 9-11.

¹⁵⁷ "Quis ignorat varia esse Spiritus sancti dona? Non dedit horum librorum auctoribus nisi donum scribendi doctrinam et regulam morum. At illis dedit donum scribendi doctrinam et regulam fidei. . . . veritas, a quocumque dicatur, a Spiritu sancto est," *ibid.*, ll. 23-28.

¹⁵⁸ "deberet haec sancta synodus facta debita discussione hoc declarare et nullum relinquere dubitandi locum vel saltem liberum omnibus relinquere, ut hoc vel illud sentiant," *ibid.*, ll. 10-13.

of many early fathers and councils: Like Calvi, he sought to answer the objections of the critics, including Cajetan. Unlike Calvi, he placed more emphasis on the apostolic content of books than on the names of their authors.¹⁵⁹ In spite of his rejection of Cajetan's views in the New Testament, Seripando urged patience and charity in judging the cardinal's position.¹⁶⁰

The third treatise, On the Epistle to the Hebrews, was prepared by Alfonso de Castro to refute the doubts voiced by Erasmus, Cajetan, and Luther with regard to this epistle. In contrast to the mild tone of Seripando's treatise, de Castro's is bitter and polemical. His criticism of Cardinal Cajetan is especially severe, for Cajetan had gone farther than Erasmus in questioning the canonicity as well as the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, he accused the cardinal of misunderstanding Jerome, using his writings selectively and subjectively, exalting

¹⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 488-496. Seripando's basic argument, however, is this: "His omnibus dubitationibus opponenda est sanctorum conciliorum auctoritas," ibid., p. 492, l. 21.

¹⁶⁰"praefari libet magnopere condonandum esse iis, qui ad nostra usque tempora hanc epistolam Paulo cabunt; nos enim eos tanquam presentes habemus, cum paulo ante e via excesserint, et: virtutem praesentem odimus, sublatam ex oculis querimus. Condonandum autem eis dico, quia Paulus ipse sese in hac epistola occultare vel maxime studuit," ibid., p. 494, 8-13. This remark occurs in Seripando's defense of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

For a careful treatment of Seripando's discussion of the canon at Trent, see Olegario Garcia de la Fuente, "El Canon biblico en el Concilio de Trento según Jerónimo Seripando," La Ciudad de Dios, LXXII (1956), 35-72.

¹⁶¹"Alii in peius proficientes nec Paulum illius authorem esse credunt nec inter canonis scripturas illam recensendam esse admittunt. Et hanc sententiam tuetur Thomas de Vio, cardinalis Caietanus vulgo nominatus, motus quibusdam rationibus, qua tam urgentes existimavit, ut nihil, quod illis responderi possit iuxta illius existimationem inveniri queat," CT, XII, 497, 12-15.

his own opinions above those of the church and her tradition, and being ignorant of Holy Scripture.¹⁶² In the main, argumentation for the Pauline authorship and canonicity of the epistle rests on the attempt to prove the traditional theory that it was written in Hebrew by Paul, and translated by one of his disciples -- a theory that Cajetan had denied. He reinforces this argument with citations from a great number of fathers, especially Pope Innocent I, and the decisions of early councils.¹⁶³ Near the end of his treatise, de Castro also deals with Luther's criticism of Hebrews, especially his misgivings about the apparent denial of forgiveness to penitent sinners in chapter six. De Castro asserts that Luther's interpretation is Novatian, then attempts to give a correct interpretation.¹⁶⁴ Although de Castro made a serious attempt to answer the objections of the critics on their own terms, it is clear that for him, as for many of his contemporaries, the judgment of the church ended all arguments about canonicity.

The fourth treatise on the canon in the proceedings of Trent was a brief treatment by Angelo Pasquali entitled On the Canonical Books.

¹⁶²"In hac argumentatione bis peccat Caietanus, quoniam nec verum assumit nec bene colligit," *ibid.*, p. 499, 47-48; "Ex quibus verbis clarissime constat, quantum intersit, integrane aut detruncta et manca citentur testimonia," p. 500, 13-14; "Hec argumentatio, ut ingenue loquar, ex ignorantia sacre scripture mihi procedere videtur," p. 504, 35-36.

¹⁶³De Castro would prefer one Innocent to a hundred Jeromes, *ibid.*, p. 501, 8-10. See also p. 502, 4-8: "non credo adeo illum dissipuisse, ut solum Hieronymum toti velit preferre ecclesie, quam concilia generalia legitime representant congregata, Hieronymus enim, etsi vir illustris fuit sanctitate et doctrina clarissimus, errare tamen potuit ut homo, sicut et in aliis illum errasse constat. Ecclesia vero, quoniam a Spiritu sancto semper regitur, in his, que ad fidem spectant, errare non potest."

¹⁶⁴"Sed re vera Lutherus non intellexit illa epistole verba, quoniam illis Paulus non agit de remissione peccatorum per penitentiam habenda, sed de illa, que habetur per baptismum, qui iterari non potest," *ibid.*, p. 505, 37-39.

Written primarily against Luther and his followers, this tract defends the canonicity of particularly the Maccabean books, James, the Apocalypse, and Hebrews, although reference is also made to Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, II Peter and II and III John. His argument is limited to a straightforward appeal to ecclesiastical tradition as articulated chiefly by the familiar fathers and councils, but also in the liturgy and general church usage.¹⁶⁵ He corroborates this evidence by quoting a number of the earliest fathers cited by Eusebius.¹⁶⁶ His treatise, like the other three, reveals the extent to which the Protestant and humanistic criticism of the canon had affected Roman Catholic thinking on the subject. None of the treatises, regardless of the position on individual books represented in them, questioned the basic assumption that acceptance by the church is the fundamental criterion of biblical canonicity.

On February 18, the council began to give attention to the relationship between Scripture and tradition, and on March 1, to abuses connected with the text, transmission, and interpretation of Scripture. On February 26, a committee of six was assigned the task of drafting the decree on these matters.¹⁶⁷ The first draft was completed on March 22, and presented

¹⁶⁵"Omnes libri enumerati per doctores inter divinos sunt ponendi inter sacros canones," *ibid.*, p. 507, 27-28; "Quaecumque leguntur in ecclesia, dum sacra ministrantur vel praeambula ad sacra, inter divina sunt numeranda," ll. 31-32; "Ex quibus nemini iam obscurum esse potest, quanti momenti sit habenda consuetudo, quae semel per ecclesiam admissa receptaque fuerit, quodque nec ei minus obtemperandum sit quam legi scriptae," ll. 43-45.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 508-509.

¹⁶⁷The committee consisted of a theologian and a canonist from each class. They were: Salvador Alexius, Michel Sarraceno, Robert Vauchop, Thomas Campeggio, Jacomo Jacobelli, and Francesco de Navarro; CT, I, 35, 21-25.

to the three classes the following day.¹⁶⁸ In the one class whose records have been preserved, John Fonseca and Bonuccio objected that the decree made no distinction between "canonical" and "accepted" books, but one of the drafters of the decree, Jacomo Jacobelli, replied: "We do not limit ourselves to the books of the Jews, but to those which the church has received."¹⁶⁹

When this draft of the decree was presented to the general congregation on March 27, many of the ensuing questions dealt with the canon. Should the decree say something about later additions to the Gospels such

¹⁶⁸CT, V, 31-32. The text of this draft pertaining to the canon follows: "Orthodoxorum patrum exempla secuta omnes libros tam veteris quam novi testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, necnon traditiones ipsas tamquam vel oretenus a Christo vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas et continua successione in ecclesias catholica conservatas, quibus par pietatis debetur affectus, summa cum reverentia pro sacris et canonicis suscipit et veneratur suscipique ab omnibus Christifidelibus statuit et decernit. Omnes itaque intelligant, quo ordine et via ipsi synodus post iactum fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura et quibus potissimum testimoniis ac praesidiis in constituendis dogmatibus et instaurandis in ecclesia moribus sit usura. Quorum sacrorum librorum indicem huic decreto adscribendum censuit, videlicet: Testamenti veteris: quinque Moysis, id est Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium; Iosue, Iudicum, Ruth, quattuor Regnum, duo Paralipomenon, Esdra, Nehemia, Thobia, Iudith, Hester, Iob, Psalmi David, Parabolae, Ecclesiastes, Cantica Canticorum, Sapientia, Ecclesiasticus, Isaia, Hieremia cum Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, duodecim prophetae minores, idest Osea, Iohel, Amos, Abdia, Iona, Michaea, Naum, Abacuch, Sophonia, Agaeus, Zacharia, Malachia -- duo Machabeorum. Testamenti novi: quattuor evangelia, Matthaei, Marci, Lucae, Ioannis -- quattuordecim epistolae Pauli, ad Romanos, duae Corinthios, ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, duae ad Thessalonicenses, ad Colossenses, duae ad Timotheum, ad Titum, ad Philemonem, ad Hebraeos, -- Petri duae, tres Ioannis, una Iacobi, una Iudae, Actus apostolorum, et Apocalypsis Ioannis. Si quis autem libros ipsos et traditiones praedictas violaverit: anathema sit."

¹⁶⁹"non restringimus nos ad Hebraeos, sed quos ecclesia Romana recipit," CT, V, 34, 35-36, and I, 523, 24-25. In this discussion, Seripando pointed out that the anathema would be impossible to apply unless the council made a clear distinction between books, CT, I, 524, 46-47: "Quomodo poterit reprehendi, si sacra synodus qui canonici sint non definiat et eorum non faciat differentiam?"

as the Marcan ending, or should it simply list the canonical chapters in each Gospel? Should the spurious writings included in later editions of the Vulgate be expressly condemned, or passed by in silence? Should the book of Psalms be designated "Psalms of David," "The Psalter of David," "The Book of 150 Psalms," or simply "The Book of Psalms?"

Should the anathema be limited to the statement on the canon, or also applied to the statement on Scripture and tradition? Should the words "for sacred and canonical" be retained?¹⁷⁰ These questions and others were collated as fourteen capita dubitationum and submitted to the fathers on March 29 to be studied prior to voting on them in the next general congregation.¹⁷¹

In the general congregation of April 1, these questions were discussed briefly and voted upon. It was resolved not to mention the disputed passages in the Gospels (thirty-four to seventeen) or the number of their canonical chapters (forty-four to three);¹⁷² not to mention the rejected spurious writings explicitly (forty-two to three); to use the title "Davidic Psalter of 150 Psalms" (sixteen), rather than "Psalms of David"

¹⁷⁰CT, V, 39-41; CT, I, 38-40. In this discussion, Seripando stated that the proposed decree contradicted itself in accepting the apostolic traditions, which include the apostolic canons; the latter regard Ecclesiasticus as non-canonical, while the Tridentine decree receives it as canonical; CT, I, 40-21-25.

¹⁷¹CT, V, 41, 8-42, 20.

¹⁷²This question dealt with the canonicity of Mark 16:9-20, Luke 22: 43-44, and John 8: 1-11, as the discussion of March 27 makes clear; see CT, V, 39, 8-10, and I, 38, 32-42. The wording of Vigerio's reply to this question influenced the final draft of the decree, CT, V, 55, 15-18: "Particulas nominatim in decreto exprimi non placet, sed in actis concilii, insinuari tamen et indicari in decreto, placet hoc modo: 'Recipimus quatuor evangelistas cum omnibus suis partibus, ut nunc leguntur in ecclesia, secundum veterem et vulgatam editionem.'"

(fourteen)¹⁷³ or "The Book of Psalms" (nine); to extend the anathema over the statement on Scripture and traditions as well as the canonical list (thirty-eight to three); to retain the words "for sacred and canonical" (forty-four to three); to replace the word "violaverit" (thirty-three to eleven); and to designate the authors of the biblical books (forty to one). The committee was then asked to prepare another draft incorporating the wishes of the general congregation.¹⁷³ During this meeting, the cardinal of Trent again expressed the need for a distinction between various books, and his remarks were approved by the abbots.¹⁷⁴ The recorded votes indicate that other council fathers were not opposed to such a distinction in principle, but felt that it should not appear in the decree.¹⁷⁵

When the no longer extant second draft was submitted to the general congregation on April 5, several questions were again raised. Should the Gospels be received "as they are read," "as they are accepted," or "as they

¹⁷³The votes are recorded in CT, V, 42-58. The one negative vote on designating the Biblical authors explained that the authority of the Gospels "non ex auctoris nomine, sed ex auctoritate ecclesiae dependet," *ibid.*, p. 56, 38-39.

¹⁷⁴"Tridentinus placere sibi summopere decretum dixit, si unum duntaxat fuisset additum, scilicet ut librorum distinctio fieret, qua hi, qui vere sacri et ad fundanda nostra dogmata boni sunt, ab iis, qui ad instruendos adolescentes et ad historiam tantum habendam facti sunt, separarentur iuxta Hieronimi et Augustini sententiam," CT, I, 38, 28-31.

¹⁷⁵This is most clearly expressed by Marco Vigerio, CT, V, 55, 43 ff.: "Etsi certa est distinctio inter sacros libros, bonis tamen rationibus placet, ut non exprimatur et absolute omnes tamquam a Spiritu Sancto editi et in quibus nulla est vel falsitas vel suspicio falsitatis, nulla distinctionis mentione facta recipiantur." Another who favored a distinction was Fonseca, *ibid.*, p. 45, 9-10: "Item 'pro canonicis et sacris' non placet, sed de canone ecclesiae esse dicatur." Six others voted simply by agreeing with the statement of Vigerio; they were Filholi, Sanfelice, Bertano, de Mussis, de Alaba, and Seripando, *ibid.*, p. 43, ll. 8 and 41; p. 45, ll. 11, 34 and 44; and p. 46, l. 42.

are held" by the church? Would it be better to place the book of Acts closer to the Pauline corpus rather than in its present inferior position?

In order to emphasize the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, should not the words "by the same apostle Paul" or something similar be added to its title?¹⁷⁶

Cardinal Madruzzo of Trent again voiced his preference for a distinction of rank among the books. He added: if the distinctions of Jerome, Augustine and others are ignored, the synod should at least take care to list the books of lesser authority after those whose canonicity has not been questioned, "for in this decree, the book of Tobit, considered apocryphal by Jerome, is named before many books whose trustworthiness has never been doubted."¹⁷⁷ Fonseca also repeated his earlier plea that certain books, especially Baruch, Judith, and the Maccabean books, be designated as belonging to the canon of the church, rather than as simply canonical.¹⁷⁸ The recorded votes indicate that five others shared the sentiments of Madruzzo and Fonseca.¹⁷⁹

On the following day, April 6, the decree was once more proposed to the classes, after having been revised slightly by the drafting committee. Once again, Fonseca urged that a distinction be made: "It

¹⁷⁶CT, V, 69-72; CT, I, 44-47.

¹⁷⁷"Alterum est, quoniam suscipimus omnes libros sprete distinctione Augustine, Hieronimi et aliorum. Saltem vel in hoc debemus animadvertere, ut libri, qui minoris auctoritatis reputantur, in decreto ultimo loco post magis canonicos reponamus. Nam in hoc decreto liber Thobie, quod a Hieronimo inter apogrifos recensetur, nominatur ante multos libros, de quorum fide nullatenus unquam dubitatum fuit," CT, I, 45, 10-14.

¹⁷⁸"dubito primum de libris Iudith, Baruc et Machabeorum; non recipiantur pro canonicis, recipiantur tamen, quod sint de canone ecclesiae," CT, V, 70, 32-34.

¹⁷⁹They were De la Guiche, Falcetta, Patus, de Mussis, and Audetus, *ibid.*, p. 70, ll. 41, 46, 48, and p. 71, ll. 2 and 26-28.

should be said that the books of Tobit, Judith, and others are canonical according to the canon of the church, not that of the Jews, because they are not in the latter." Fonseca, however, gave his approval after hearing Cervini's explanation:

Although what you say is true, yet we do not follow the canon of the Jews. When we say "canonical," we do not thereby mean that they are in the canon of the Jews, but in the canon of the church. That is why we also put in the decree the words, "as they are found in the Latin Vulgate edition."¹⁸⁰

The manner of referring to Hebrews was also discussed briefly. One group, led by Pacheco, argued strenuously for explicitly naming Paul as the author, since the Lutherans not only deny its Pauline authorship, but assert that it was written by an heretic.¹⁸¹ Several agreed with him, but Seripando pointed out that the decree met this concern by referring to fourteen Pauline epistles. Moreover, he added with probable reference to Cajetan, those who have doubted its authorship have not done so pertinaciously and have been willing to submit to the judgment of the Pope and the holy church.¹⁸²

On the next day, the decree was presented to the general congregation. Only one important objection was raised to the wording on the canon, namely, that the books of Esdras and Judith be placed at the end of the

¹⁸⁰"Etsi verum sit quod dicis, nos tamen non sequimur canonem Hebreorum. Non intelligimus igitur, cum dicimus 'canonici' idest qui sunt in canone Hebraeorum, sed de canone ecclesiae. Ideo nos etiam posuimus in decreto: 'prout in vulgata editione latina habentur,'" *ibid.*, p. 77, 24-27.

¹⁸¹"quod Lutherani non dicunt solum, eam epistolam ad Hebraeos non esse Pauli, sed etiam esse factam a quodam haeretico," *ibid.*, p. 78, 1-2.

¹⁸²"De epistola Pauli ad Hebraeos bene provisum est in decreto: '14 epistolae Pauli'. . . Praesertim qui de ea dubitaverunt, pertinaciter non dubitaverunt, sed se submitiendo iudicio Summi Pontificis et ecclesiae sanctae," *ibid.*, p. 77, 42-46.

list as being outside of the Bible proper.¹⁸³ Finally, in a solemn session on April 8, 1546, after two months of discussion and revision, the council fathers gave their approval to the decree. The final text (pertaining to the canon) is as follows:

Following, then, the examples of the orthodox Fathers, it [the holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent] receives and venerates with a feeling of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; also the traditions, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession. It has thought it proper, moreover, to insert in this decree a list of the sacred books, lest a doubt might arise in the mind of someone as to which are the books received by this council. They are the following: of the Old Testament, the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Josue, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, two of Paralipomenon, the first and second of Esdras, the latter of which is called Nehemias, Tobias, Judith, Esther, Job, the Davidic Psalter of 150 Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Canticle of Canticles, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Isaias, Jeremias, with Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, the twelve minor Prophets, namely, Osee, Joel, Amos, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggeus, Zacharias, Malachias; two books of Machabees, the first and second. Of the New Testament, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; the Acts of the Apostles written by Luke the Evangelist; fourteen Epistles of Paul the Apostle, to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two of Peter the Apostle, three of John the Apostle, one of James the Apostle, one of Jude the Apostle, and the Apocalypse of John the Apostle. If anyone does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the Old Latin Vulgate Edition, and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema. Let all understand, therefore, in what order and manner the council, after having laid the foundation of the confession of faith, will proceed, and who are the chief witnesses

¹⁸³"Item placeret, libros Esdrae et Iudith extra bibliam in fine poni," *ibid.*, p. 85, 4. This suggestion came from Lippomanus who arrived in Trent on the evening of April 4; cf. *ibid.*, n. 1. Evidently he had not noticed that III and IV Esdras were not even mentioned in the decree.

and supports to whom it will appeal in confirming dogmas and restoring morals in the Church.¹⁸⁴

A comparison of the final draft of April 8 with the first draft of March 23 reveals various changes. Many of these appear to be stylistic or not particularly significant in terms of the canon question. Others, however, reflect the council discussion. In the final draft, the words "lest a doubt might arise in the mind of someone as to which are the books received by this council," were inserted before the listing of books. This statement evidently expressed the desire of the council fathers, reflected many times during the course of the debate, to avoid giving the impression to the church that the canonical criticisms of the humanists and reformers had caused them to entertain any doubts about the canon. Second, there were various changes in the titles of the listed books, and the book of Acts has been moved to a more prominent position. The

¹⁸⁴"Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures," in Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, edited and translated by H. J. Schroeder (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1941), pp. 17-18. In the third line of the above citation, Schroeder has failed to translate the important word "pari" in the expression "with a feeling of piety and reverence."

The Latin text of the decree is given in Schroeder, pp. 296-297, and in CT, V, 91. That portion pertaining to the canon (omitting the list of books) is as follows:

"Orthodoxorum patrum exempla secuta, omnes libros tam veteris quam novi testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, necnon traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem tum ad mores pertinentes, tamquam vel ore tenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas et continua successione in ecclesia catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit ac veneratur. Sacrorum vero librorum indicem huic decreto adscribendum censuit, ne cui dubitatio suboriri possit, quinam sint qui ab ipsa synodo suscipiuntur. Sunt vero infrascripti. . . Si quis autem libros ipsos integros cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in ecclesia catholica legi consueverunt non suscepit, et traditiones praedictas sciens et prudens contempserit: anathema sit. Omnes itaque intelligant quo ordine et via ipsa synodus post jactum fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura, et quibus potissimum testimoniis ac praesidiis in confirmandis dogmatibus et instaurandis in ecclesia moribus sit usura."

most significant change in titles occurred in the listing of the New Testament antilegomena, where, in each case, the author is explicitly called an apostle. A third change was the addition, in the second last sentence, of the words "in their entirety and with all their parts." This phrase doubtlessly reflects the discussion of March 27 and April 1, when the canonical status of the ending to Mark's Gospel, a portion of the twenty-second chapter of Luke, and the Johannine pericope of the adulterous woman was questioned.¹⁸⁵ As it stands, the phrase would also include the Septuagint additions to Esther and Daniel.¹⁸⁶ Finally, the final draft of the decree added the words, "as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the Old Latin Vulgate Edition." This statement was probably not intended to exalt the position of the Vulgate so much as to assure the church that her most popular Bible was canonically reliable and that the Tridentine position on the canon, unlike the theories of modernists, had been hallowed by centuries of tradition.

As a means of identifying the canonical books, however, the last mentioned phrase was less successful. The Old Latin Vulgate Edition had often enough contained uncertain texts and books, among the latter III and IV Esdras, III Maccabees, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the Epistle to the Laodiceans. That the decree failed to give any of these writings

¹⁸⁵ Supra, p. 195, n. 172.

¹⁸⁶ James M. Vosté, "The Vulgate at the Council of Trent," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, IX (1947), 15, n. 30, ambiguously refers this phrase to "the parts called 'deuterocanonical' rejected by the Protestants, not single verses or phrases which are proved by critics to be glosses either with regard to the original text, or in the manuscripts or various editions of the Vulgate itself."

canonical status indicates that the council, like the humanists and reformers, had also engaged in canonical criticism. The reason for the rejection of these books, however, is hardly indicated by the decree.

A more crucial question of interpretation is whether the decree eliminated distinctions of authority between canonical books. The usual answer has been affirmative,¹⁸⁷ but an analysis of the council's deliberations challenges that assumption, especially for the Old Testament. While it cannot be denied that a majority of council fathers opposed such a distinction, the given reasons for omitting such a distinction, as well as for not including a refutation of criticisms, were more strategic than theological. From the very first, some fathers felt that the council should not close this question which had been left open for centuries.¹⁸⁸ Others, convinced of the need for absolute certainty and concerned with how the church would receive the decree, wanted to avoid the impression that the church had in any way been moved by contemporary criticisms of

¹⁸⁷Maichle states, p. 76: "Die Möglichkeit und Freiheit, die deuterokanonischen Bücher geringer zu werten als die protokanonischen -- eine Auffassung, der wir in der vortridentinischen Zeit immer wieder, zuletzt bei Cajetan, begegnen --, ist durch den Konzilsbeschluss vom 8. April indiskutabel geworden." Nikolaus Appel, Kanon und Kirche, Die Kanonkrise im heutigen Protestantismus als Kontroverstheologisches Problem (Paderborn: Bonifacius Druckerei, 1964), p. 97, agrees with Maichle: "Es wurde nicht der geringste Unterschied von Autorität oder Rang gemacht: 'pari pietatis affectu' wurden sämtliche Bücher angenommen. Wer sich nicht an diesen Ausspruch des Konzils halten will, wird durch das 'anathema' getroffen." Duncker, "The Canon of the Old Testament at the Council of Trent," p. 299, concedes "that many admitted some distinction between the books, but did not want this expressed in the decree, preferring to leave the question as it was before." He insists, however, that even the disputed books have the same authority in dogmatic matters as do the other books because all are "sacred and canonical," acknowledging only an apologetic need for a distinction.

¹⁸⁸Supra, p. 183, notes 131 and 132.

the canon.¹⁸⁹ The reception accorded the continued suggestion of Madruzzo, Fonseca, Seripando, and others that such a distinction be incorporated in the decree was, to be sure, negative, but primarily because it was deemed unwise to deal with such a complicated issue in a conciliar decree. In fact, Fonseca obviously understood Cardinal Cervini's answer of April 6 to acknowledge the distinction between the Hebrew canon and the church's canon, or he would not likely have given his "placet" so quickly.¹⁹⁰ One of the votes explicitly expresses this interpretation.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the fact that the last meetings before the adoption of the decree record no dissent from Seripando, strongly suggests that he found the decree compatible with his own strong convictions on this matter.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹Supra, pp. 181 and 183, notes 125 and 133. Duncker, "The Canon of the Old Testament at the Council of Trent," p. 298, summarizes the argumentation thus: "However, several thought it better to enter into the difficulties concerning the disputed books in order to convince their opponents, to confirm the wavering and instruct the ignorant, to settle these doubts once and for all, to be able to account for what was determined by the Council, to prevent a possible accusation that the Council was not free but forced by authority, papistical, and to show on the contrary how wisely and circumspectly it had acted. But others, no less concerned for the honour of the Council, preferred no discussion, not merely because they thought such examination superfluous, as it had already been done before, but primarily because they considered that what had already been determined by former Councils (and this the others also admitted) should not again be a matter of discussion, the more so as the adversaries would then be able to boast that their objections had made them doubt in matters of faith."

¹⁹⁰Supra, p. 198, n. 180.

¹⁹¹See the statement by Vigerio, supra, p. 196, n. 175. Duncker, "The Canon of the Old Testament at the Council of Trent," p. 297, states that Bishop Vigerio's text "admirably expresses the view of the Fathers, who having to deal with the Sacred Scriptures found themselves faced with the difficulties arising from entering into the thorny question of the controverted books."

¹⁹²Seripando expressed his agreement with the statement of Vigerio, CT, V, 46, 42.

Furthermore, it seems likely that the words "with the same and equal reverence" used in recording the vote on February 15 were a later addition of the secretary rather than an actually adopted wording.¹⁹³ At any rate, the phrase in the final draft of the decree, "with a feeling of equal piety and reverence [pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia]," describes a parity between the Holy Scriptures and the traditions, and not within the Scriptures themselves.

To be sure, the decree accepts all listed books as "sacred and canonical" and affirms that "one God is the author of both" Testaments. Does not the council's ascription of divine inspiration to all listed books eliminate the possibility that some of them might possess inferior authority?¹⁹⁴ Two factors must be kept in mind. First, the inspiration of all books listed in Trent's canon had been affirmed already by the Council of Florence in the bull of Eugenius IV. Trent's ascription of inspiration to these books, while doubtlessly reflecting sincere conviction, evidenced its desire to follow "the examples of the orthodox Fathers" also in this point. But it cannot be regarded as a statement devised by Trent to eliminate the kind of intracanonical criticism practiced during the previous thirty years. Second, several sixteenth century Roman Catholics who expressed their acceptance of the Florentine decree did not

¹⁹³ Duncker, "The Canon of the Old Testament at the Council of Trent," p. 294, states, "it is undoubtedly difficult to understand how these precise words could have been used by the Fathers as early as February 15th to signify parity between the Scriptures themselves."

¹⁹⁴ Duncker, *ibid.*, p. 299, argues that the inspired character of also the disputed books means that dogmatically they have the same value as the others, "so that certainly they are not only for moral instruction, but also from them valid arguments may be drawn to prove and defend matters of faith." This judgment evidently reflects his own understanding of inspiration.

hesitate to assign an inferior authority to some inspired books. This was true not only of Erasmus and Cajetan, whose criticisms of the New Testament antilegomena were condemned by the Sorbonne,¹⁹⁵ but of men like Pagninus, Driedo, and Seripando whose orthodoxy on this question was not challenged. In fact, Seripando's treatise written at the Council of Trent acknowledges different levels of inspiration and argues that not all inspired books have equal dogmatic authority.¹⁹⁶

But even if the decree did not intend to forbid distinctions of authority within the inspired sacred and canonical scriptures, it did nothing to encourage them. In fact, its retention of the traditional order of books within the Old Testament, its reference to the Vulgate edition, and its ascription of apostolic authorship to the New Testament antilegomena all tended to obliterate any realistic distinction. Moreover, while the proceedings of the council reveal sympathy toward such a distinction within the Old Testament, this attitude is entirely lacking with regard to the New Testament. Even Seripando, perhaps the most friendly of the council fathers toward Cajetanian criticism, rejected anything but a nominal distinction within the New Testament. In general, it cannot be denied that the decree's statement on the canon represented a victory for the conservative tendency within the Roman Catholic church.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵In neither condemnation did the Sorbonne theologians criticize the positions of Erasmus and Cajetan on the Old Testament. For a discussion of these censures, see supra, pp. 73-75 and 93-96.

¹⁹⁶Supra, p. 190, n. 157.

¹⁹⁷Maichle, p. 76, correctly observes: "Die langen Verhandlungen endeten mit einem Siege der konservativen Richtung, die von Anfang an für die Annahme des florentinischen Kanons ohne wissenschaftliches Beiwerk eintrat."

There can be little doubt about Trent's criteria of canonicity. Following the theologians discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as the long medieval tradition, Trent acknowledged the authoritative decision of the church as the ultimate criterion of canonicity and all dogmatic truth. To be sure, the church merely "receives and venerates" the biblical books. But its very willingness to declare which books these are, and to make this declaration a dogma by attaching an anathema on all dissenters, makes it plain that Trent regarded ecclesiastical judgment as the ultimate canon of faith. The argumentation in the council debate reinforces this conclusion. However, the decree clearly indicates that ecclesiastical judgment is to be predicated only on the basis of the divinely inspired Scriptures and traditions. Thus the dogma of the canon promulgated by the council, since it is not taught in the Scriptures, has its basis in the traditions which were "dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession." Trent's appeal to tradition is evident in its designation of the canonical books as those which "have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the Old Latin Vulgate Edition." Noticeably absent in the decree is an explicit appeal to the prior judgments of councils and popes, although such appeals figured strongly in the debate.

Significantly, Trent's concept of tradition is more dogmatic than historical. That Trent could rely more heavily on her own consensus with the post-Augustinian Western tradition than on the tradition of the earlier apostolic and post-apostolic church reflected her conviction that the later church has a greater perception of the truth than did its early predecessors. It could be acknowledged that certain books had been

disputed for hundreds of years and not even mentioned in the Council of Laodicea, for the decisive factor was that the church had come to venerate and receive them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is the Inspirer of traditions no less than of Scripture. Thus tradition is not merely the witness of history to divine truth, but the progressive development of dogmatic consciousness which enables the later church to declare something to be an article of faith which the early church had considered doubtful. The past decisions of popes and councils are not merely pieces of historical evidence, but irrevocably binding statements of divine truth emanating from Christ and the Holy Spirit through the holy apostles and their successors. Trent's conviction that her sources of faith were truly apostolic in origin is reflected in her ascription of apostolic authorship to all New Testament antilegomena, even to those whose authors did not claim to be apostles. Strikingly, the council's decision for the apostolic authorship of these books rested less on historical and literary grounds than on the supposition that the official church had received such books as apostolic.

In reality, Trent's definition of the canon on the basis of her living and inspired tradition was no less dogmatic in nature than Luther's attempt to determine apostolicity on the basis of the Christ-content of a book. Her further declaration that apostolic traditions and Holy Scripture are to be received and venerated "with a feeling of equal piety and reverence" ultimately meant that canonical Scripture was not the only canon for the faith and life of the Roman Catholic church. In her exercise of ecclesiastical authority and veneration of ecclesiastical traditions, as in many other areas, the Council of Trent was to have a profound effect on succeeding generations of Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians.

CHAPTER V

THE CANON IN POST-TRIDENTINE THEOLOGY

By the middle of the sixteenth century the divisions in visible Christendom were more firmly established than ever, and hopes for their speedy resolution appeared dim. Interdenominational battle lines had been clearly defined through scores of polemical treatises and a number of confessional affirmations. The first generation of reformers was dead, and the responsibility for ecclesiastical and theological leadership in Protestantism had passed to their successors. The Roman Catholic Church had begun to formulate its official answers to a host of controverted questions, including that of the biblical canon in 1546. The general context of theological discussion was no longer the same as it had been earlier in the century. For Roman Catholics, the extent of the canon had become a dogma, and Protestants not only had to evaluate the Tridentine decision, but to assess the canonical criticism of their fathers.

This chapter examines how representative Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran theologians treated the canon of Holy Scripture in the decades following the Tridentine decision. It demonstrates not only that Trent was understood by Roman Catholics to eliminate intracanonical distinctions, but that it intensified Protestant opposition to the Roman theory that the church authenticates Holy Scripture. Roman theologians Catharinus, Cano, Sixtus, and Bellarmine unanimously affirmed that the once questioned books have now achieved full canonical status through the authoritative decision of the church, and continued the pre-Tridentine polemic against the criticisms of humanists and reformers. John Calvin

gave classic Protestant expression to the counter-assertion that Scripture authenticates itself and is ultimately recognized as divine only through the witness of the Holy Spirit. Although Calvin retained a measure of canonical criticism, he shared the general Reformed conviction expressed by Musculus, Vermillius, Beza, and several Reformed confessions that the Old Testament apocrypha are to be rejected while the New Testament antilegomena are to be accepted. The position of Lutheran theology, as represented by Brenz, Flacius, and Chemnitz, remained more critical of the New Testament antilegomena, but the grounds for this criticism were almost exclusively historical. Like some Reformed theologians, Lutherans also began to acknowledge a legitimate role for the church's testimony in the formation of the canon. But Lutherans refused to make the extent of the canon an article of faith in their confessional documents, thereby acknowledging the Protestant conviction that every dogma must be grounded in Scripture itself.¹

Roman Catholicism

One of the earliest and most comprehensive Roman Catholic treatments

¹This period in the discussion of the canon has been treated only briefly and infrequently. The most useful treatment is that of Johannes Leipoldt, Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, Zweiter Teil: Mittelalter und Neuzeit (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908), pp. 51-60, 121-131, and 143-153. Some useful data is also provided by Henry H. Howorth, "The Canon of the Bible among the Later Reformers," The Journal of Theological Studies, X (1909), 183-232. Materially, our discussion expands such treatments by dealing with more theologians; discussing their position on both Testaments and in greater detail; and in analyzing the evidence of the confessional documents more carefully. Interpretively, our treatment differs from these in not regarding the testimony of the Holy Spirit as a criterion of canonicity in the technical sense, and in emphasizing the significance of the Lutheran failure to make the extent of the canon an article of faith.

of the biblical canon following the Tridentine decision of 1546 was the 1552 treatise of Ambrosius Catharinus.² Written seventeen years after his first published attack on Cajetan,³ and by a theologian who also participated in some of the Tridentine discussions on the canon,⁴ this treatise is an important reflection of mid-sixteenth century Roman Catholic thought on the subject.

Catharinus' treatise had an admittedly apologetic intent, namely, to provide the testimonies of popes and councils which would enable the reader to "respond properly and correctly to certain arguments of the adversaries."⁵ In an introductory section, Catharinus defines what is meant by the description of Scripture as divine, prophetic, holy, sacred, and canonical. His definition of the latter term clearly reveals his criteriology of canonicity. Some scriptures may be divine but not canonical, he explains, but all canonical scripture is divine. The revelation of the Holy Spirit makes Scripture divine, "but the judgment of the church

²Ambrosius Catharinus (Lancelotto Politi), "De Divinis et Canonicis Scripturis," Enarrationes in Quinque Priora Capita Libri Geneseos. Adduntur plerique alii Tractatus et Quaestiones rerum variarum ac scitu dignissimarum (Romae: Apud Antonium Bladum, 1552), republished as Enarrationes, Assertiones, Disputationes (Ridgewood, N. J.: Gregg Press Incorporated, 1964), cols. 293-330.

³Supra, pp. 171-172.

⁴Catharinus is listed as one of the Dominican theologians present for the fourth session. See Stephanus Ehses, editor, Concilii Tridentini Actorum pars altera, in Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, Actorum, Epistularum, Tractarum Nova Collectio, editit Societas Goerresiana (Editio secunda stereotypa; Friburgi in Brisgoviae: Ex aede et sumptibus Herder, 1963-1966), V, 103.

Massarelli also notes in his third diary that Catharinus met with the papal legates on April 5 to discuss the proposed decree. See Sebastianus Merkle, editor, Concilii Tridentini Diariorum pars prima, in Concilium Tridentinum, I, 533, 13-15.

⁵Catharinus, "De Divinis," Praefatio, cols. 293-294.

declaring it to be revealed and placing it into the canon makes it canonical."⁶ The power of the church in judging the canon is twofold: it may determine whether non-canonical books are divine, and whether such divine books are canonical.⁷

It should not be doubted that this power of judgment rests with the church and that the church exercises it infallibly, for if the least falsity were admitted, Scripture would not have firm authority. Precisely speaking, this power of "recognizing the Scriptures, declaring them to be divine, and making them canonical" rests with the pope, who may consult either learned men or ecumenical councils in making his judgment.⁸ The canonization of Scripture is analogous to the canonization of saints: in both cases, the pope's decision is infallible and is made on the basis of supporting evidence. And in both cases, his decision declares, rather than makes, someone or something to be holy.⁹

⁶"Divinam ergo scripturam facit Spiritu sancti revelatio: canonicam autem autem facit iudicium Ecclesiae declarans esse revelatam, et illam in Canonem referens," *ibid.*, col. 296.

⁷"primo scilicet, utrum sit divina, ac propterea in Canonem asciscenda: secundo, utrum sit canonica, hoc est, in Canone posita. . . .Opus est de utroque esse iudicandi potestatem in Ecclesia," *ibid.*

⁸"Illam enim esse in Ecclesia Dei et in summo tribunali necesse est, quod et esse omnino oportet ab omni errore immune: quoniam haec res pertinet ad fidem, cui non potest subesse falsum. Si enim vel in minimo falsitas admittatur, nulla supererit Scripturae solida autoritas. Necesse est igitur potestatem hanc, videlicet cognoscendi Scripturas, et declarandi divinas, et faciendi canonicas, esse in Capite Ecclesiae, hoc est, in summo Sacerdote, qui hoc legitime debet cognoscere ac decernere. . . .Potest autem hoc facere summus Pontifex vel per se consultis doctis viris ut res ipsa postulat, vel per universale Concilium si id viderit expedire," *ibid.*

⁹"ita in canonizatione sanctorum scripturarum, ut declarentur sanctae atque divinae, quaerendum est prius per humana iudicia et probabiles conjecturas. . . .ut nihil penitus erroris irrepere sit permissurus, ne quovis modo ullum fidei nostrae periculum generetur," *ibid.*, col. 297.

Biblical canonicity does not depend on human authorship, nor in the case of the Old Testament, on the judgment of the Jews, for God is the true author of Scripture and only his church can recognize his authorship.¹⁰

Cajetan's use of the Hebrew canon as a norm overlooked two factors: first, because the Jews are the enemies of Christ, their judgment alone is not to be trusted. Second, the Jews who lived before Christ indeed judged certain Scriptures to be divine. The church values that judgment, but does not regard it as final. With the progress of time, the later church decided to add other books to her Old Testament canon.¹¹

Certain books of the Old Testament may be clearly recognized as canonical by observing the testimony of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament. But any other writing not cited there may be recognized as canonical if it meets one or more of five general conditions of canonicity: one, if it is cited as divine by other canonical scriptures; two, if it is used by the church as a divine book; three, if its content teaches the things of God; four, if the author was either a prophet or an apostle; and five, if it was accepted by the consensus of the ancient fathers.¹² The last point is particularly significant, for it is improper

¹⁰Ibid., cols. 297-298.

¹¹"Non propterea tamen cogimur solos eos habere probatos quos in suum Canonem admiserunt. Potest quippe fieri, imo sic factum est et fieri consuevit, ut qui aliquando non essent in Canone, progressu temporis in illo siti sunt. Non enim quum primum liber divinus conscriptus est, statim censetur in Canone, sed primo venit in notitiam singulorum, et paulatim auctoritatem acquirit, et interdum citra ullam controversiam aut hesitationem communi Ecclesiae consensu recipitur, et absque ulla penitus quaestione canonizatur," ibid., col. 298.

¹²"Primum, . . . si forte in Scriptura aliqua canonica citetur aliquid de illo libro de quo sit quaestio. . . . Secunda est, si in usu ecclesiarum dum aguntur divina, tanquam divinus legendus proponitur. . . . Tertia consideratio versatur in inspectione argumenti ipsius libri, si doceat quae Dei sunt et quae ad illius voluntatem attinet. . . . Quarta

to challenge a book canonized by the popes or councils.¹³

Catharinus then applies his criteriology to the questioned books of the Old and New Testaments. Tobit was reckoned among the apocrypha by the Jews, "but not by the church of God, which does not follow the synagog." Even Jerome preferred the judgment of the church to that of the Pharisees, and counted this book among the inspired hagiographa.¹⁴ More important than Jerome's witness, however, is the positive judgment of councils and popes.¹⁵ The books of Judith and the Maccabees were similarly "received into the canon in the decrees of councils and Roman popes." That Gregory, following Jerome, seems to limit the Maccabean books to edificatory purposes does not disparage their authority, for books of doubtful authority could not be edifying.¹⁶ Books that have passed through

consideratio est, si autor libri inscriptus fuerit certus propheta a Deo institutus verbo expresso, . . . vel in novo testamento si fuerit Apostolus, aut saltem insignis et apostolicus vir. . . . Quinta consideratio est, ut videamus quid de tali Scriptura senserint antiqui Patres, et orthodoxi Doctores. Si enim communis eorum consensus fuerit librum esse divinum, hoc ipso consensu, etiam tacito quodam modo sit canonicus," *ibid.*, col. 299.

¹³"ita in canonizatione Scripturarum hoc primum inspicitur, videlicet piorum ac sanctorum persuasio atque consensio. Quum autem liber fuerit per summum Pontificem aut per Concilia universalia canonizatus, aut etiam per provincialia quae recepta fuerint, iniurium est praeterea aliud inquirere ac retractare velle," *ibid.*, col. 300.

¹⁴"quem non est dubium ab Hebraeis reiici, et ab eisdem inter apocrypha numerari, sed non ab Ecclesia Dei, quae non sequitur Synagoga," *ibid.* Catharinus' discussion of Jerome is evidently based on a faulty text which read "hagiographa" instead of "apocrypha."

¹⁵After referring to the Council of Florence and popes Gelasius, Innocent I, Clement, Marcellus, Melchiades, Benedict I, and Damasus, Catharinus notes: "Hi omnes fuerunt summi Pontifices, quorum gravissima in huiusmodi est autoritas," *ibid.*, col. 301.

¹⁶"Aedificatur autem Ecclesia quae credit, nec spiritu contradictionis agitur," *ibid.*, col. 302. See also col. 303: "Quare magnopere mirandum

the fire of doubt have become all the more powerful, and men who deny this are arrogant.¹⁷ The books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus are canonical on many counts. They are cited in the New Testament, were used for centuries by the church as divine books and contain a remarkable number of important truths.¹⁸ Furthermore, they were cited as divine and prophetic scripture by the holy fathers, "not only for the formation of morals, but for the establishment and confirmation of dogmas."¹⁹ Above all, the testimony of popes and sacred councils "ought to close the mouths of all adversaries." Not only the recent Council of Trent, but also the Councils of Carthage and Florence and popes Innocent I and Gelasius, have declared these books to be canonical.²⁰

In the New Testament, Catharinus particularly condemns the views of Erasmus and Cajetan, although he also rejects Luther's position on

est, quam stulti et tardi corde sumus interdum ad credendum, cum sciamus Spiritum Dei esse in Ecclesia, qui nequaquam permetteret in cultu Dei, in quo est protestatio ac professio fidei nostrae, tam perniciosa mendacia, recipere scilicet et canere populis tanquam certam prophetiam quae non sit vere prophetia."

¹⁷"Et vere magna est horum arrogantia, qui Ecclesiae spiritum non sequuntur. Hoc quidem prodest Ecclesiae: quia veritas quae semper superat, his disceptionibus velut aurum per ignem, magis ac magis illustris sit et conspicua," *ibid.*, col. 302.

¹⁸Catharinus notes that they portray the sacrificial death of Christ, the redemption of Adam through the Son of God, and the state of integrity of the first man; *ibid.*, col. 305.

¹⁹"necum ad formandos mores, sed ad dogmata statuenda vel confirmanda," *ibid.*, col. 306.

²⁰"Sed quae omnium adversantium deberent ora claudere, extant sacra Concilia," *ibid.* On the Council of Trent, Catharinus states, col. 307: "Quamobrem novissime Concillium Tridentinum haec omnia summa cum diligentia ponderans et animadvertens, hos et alios quosdam libros, de quibus recentes magistri dubitationem moverant, magno consensu declararunt vere esse de Canone."

James. He argues the case for the Pauline authorship and canonicity of Hebrews, relying heavily on the testimony of ecclesiastical usage, conciliar and papal authority, and the witness of the fathers. He notes that even the Council of Trent did not concern itself greatly with this question because it regarded it as closed.²¹ He condemns Cajetan for choosing Jerome as his canonical norm, "since the holy church is the rule," and then proceeds to show that Jerome accepted the Pauline authorship and canonicity of Hebrews.²² Formerly, this epistle was rejected only by heretics. Erasmus and Cajetan, too, "have shared in the spirit of Arius,"²³ for they have opposed the opinion of every author "who merits some praise in the church" as well as councils and popes.²⁴ Luther's judgment on James is typical of a heretic's rejection of a book that opposes his teaching,²⁵ but Cajetan, too, has opposed the church by casting doubt on this book.²⁶ Furthermore, if this epistle were not of certain authorship and canonicity, its testimony would not have been

²¹"Quamobrem nostris diebus in Concilio Tridentino nulla facta est hac de re quaestio, tanquam iam transacta et certa nimis," *ibid.*, col. 310.

²²"Quis enim dedit unquam B. Hieronymo ut esset regula discretionis canonicorum librorum, cum Ecclesia sancta sit regula?", *ibid.*, col. 313.

²³*Ibid.*, col. 315.

²⁴"contra omnium autorum sententiam qui laudem aliquam in Ecclesia meruerunt, et contra Concilia et decreta magnorum Praesulum et summorum Pontificum," *ibid.*, col. 318.

²⁵"Illud omnino iniquum, haereticis tamen frequentissimum, ut quum quid pro illis facere videtur, etiam testimonium ex ea scriptura sumant quam ipsi reprobant," *ibid.*, col. 319.

²⁶*Ibid.*, cols. 320-321. Catharinus suggests that Cajetan's principle that we must still question books that were once doubted is no more valid than maintaining that we should doubt "de Christi resurrectione, quia Thomas Apostolus aliquando dubitavit," *ibid.*, col. 321.

used to establish the sacrament of extreme unction.²⁷

II Peter, Jude, and Revelation are all canonical and apostolic, as the numerous testimonies of councils, popes, and fathers reveal.²⁸ Just as the additions to Daniel and Esther are rejected only by Jews and heretics,²⁹ so also the questioned portions of the Gospels as well as the comma Iohanneum are challenged only by heretics; but their full canonicity is assured through the testimony of many fathers and popes and their long use in the liturgy.³⁰ Catharinus concludes his treatise with the assertion: "The opinions and decrees of holy teachers, popes, and sacred councils must be firmly followed."³¹ Catharinus' treatment of the canon is distinguished by two factors: the bitter polemic against Cardinal Cajetan nearly twenty years after his death, and the exaltation of the pope as the highest judge of the canonical books. The Council of Trent had not changed his views on the canon, but was simply the most recent statement by the authoritative judging church on a matter that she had decided long before.

The canon of Holy Scripture again received careful attention in the

²⁷"ex hac una epistola, sancta Dei Ecclesia Extremae unctionis sacramentum elicuit, et in usum tradidit. . . .At hoc esset maximum absurdum si haec epistola non fuisset certi auctoris, et certe canonica," ibid., col. 322.

²⁸Ibid., cols. 323-326.

²⁹"istas historias apud solos Iudaeos et haereticos non haberi in Canone," ibid., col. 328.

³⁰Ibid., cols. 329-330.

³¹"sanctorum vero Doctorum, summorum Pontificum, et sacrosanctorum Conciliorum sententiis atque decretis firmissime adhaerendum," ibid., col. 330.

1563 dogmatics of Melchior Cano.³² Cano was primarily concerned to establish the authority of the church to determine canonicity, and secondarily to prove the full canonicity of the fourteen books challenged by Erasmus, Cajetan, and the reformers. Although milder in tone than Catharinus' treatise, Cano's work, too, was basically polemical. After treating the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Holy Scripture, Cano examines the claim of the reformers that the Scriptures do not require the approbation of the church.³³ Cano responds to this claim with five counter-assertions. First, he insists, it is impossible for Holy Scripture to judge its own contents. The Scripture nowhere offers any means for determining that books like Job, Ruth, and Esther are canonical, but that others are not.³⁴ Second, the determination of which Scriptures are canonical is not a matter of individual judgment. Even when such individuals are learned men, the end result is confusion and disagreement.³⁵ Third, the authority of the church is the highest tribunal for judging which books are to be accepted or rejected. This principle has been established by councils and popes, but it is also a logical necessity.³⁶

³²Melchior Cano, *De locis Theologicis Libri duodecim* (Salmanticae: Mathius Gastius, 1563), Liber secundus, capita V-XI, pp. 20-58.

³³"Et quidem, quod ad primam partem attinet, Lutherani aliquando asserverunt, scripturam non egere ecclesiae aut alterius cuiusque approbatione, sed iudicium de scriptura ex ipsis scripturis esse faciendum," *ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁴"Prima propositio. Iudicium de scripturis per scripturas ipsas, nullo pacto idoneum esse potest," *ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁵"Secunda propositio. Iudicium de scripturis canonicis ad privatos reip. Christianae cives non pertinet," *ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁶"Tertia propositio. Ab ecclesia est determinandum, quisnam liber sit canonicus, et illius auctoritas certa regula est, ad libros vel in sacrorum numerum recipiendos, vel etiam ex eo numero reiiciendos," *ibid.*, p. 24.

To be sure, the present church does not have the authority to author additional Scriptures, but it clearly has the right to decide the canonicity of questioned books.³⁷ Nor can the present church err in such matters of faith, for its testimonies stem from Christ and the apostles.³⁸

Cano's fourth counter-assertion is that the power to decide canonicity rests chiefly in universal councils. This power follows from the pastoral responsibility of bishops as well as the logical necessity of having a suitable means for settling controversies.³⁹ That this emphasis on conciliar responsibility does not detract from *papal* authority is evident from Cano's fifth and last counter-assertion, namely, that it pertains to the pope's office to decide which books are canonical, for he is the final arbiter of all controversies.⁴⁰ Cano emphasizes that the church's authority alone does not move one to believe the canon, but is nevertheless a "cause without which we would not believe."⁴¹ The church has the power of judging the Scriptures from Christ, and his Spirit remains

³⁷"Illud vero demonstrandum est, Ecclesiam fidelium nunc viventium non quidem scribere canonicum librum posse, sed definire an liber de quo disputatio est, canonicus sit an non," *ibid.*, p. 26. Cf. also p. 24:

³⁸"Praeterea, Ecclesia quae nunc est, in fide errare non potest. . . . Nam et Ecclesia praesens docere eos, qui fidem susceperint, suo iure potest quaecunque fidei sunt, et sacros libros, quos per traditionem veterum accepit, posteris suis ipsa tradere," *ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁹"Quarta propositio. Ad concilium universale praecipue pertinet definire qui liber sit canonicus," *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁰"Quinta propositio. Ad Summum Pontificem pertinet definire, qui nam liber sit canonicus," *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴¹"Non est enim ecclesiae auctoritas ratio per se movens ad credendum, sed causa, sine qua non crederemus," *ibid.*, p. 35.

in the church to eternity.⁴²

Cano then discusses the controverted books of both Testaments individually, asserting on the basis of copious citations from fathers, councils and popes that each of them is fully canonical, and that the arguments of Erasmus, Cajetan, and Luther are invalid. As a matter of principle, he maintains that not all books were received as canonical by the church at the same time; therefore, later councils must not be pitted against early testimonies.⁴³ Nor is Jerome's opinion the rule for determining canonicity, for he mistakenly followed Josephus in this matter, rather than the testimony of the church.⁴⁴ Rufinus, too, was ignorant of the traditions of the fathers.⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is incorrect to assert that the Jews rejected the disputed Old Testament books; there is a difference between rejecting and failing to receive such books.⁴⁶ But most importantly, the testimonies of councils and popes prove that the seven controverted books in the Old Testament are

⁴²"Atque ecclesia sine usurpata auctoritate, quemadmodum ante constituimus, hanc habet a Christo facultatem, spiritus, inquit, meus, qui est in te, et verba mea, quae posui in ore tuo, non recedent de ore seminis tui usque in sempiternum," *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴³"non omnes libros canonicos esse simul ab universa ecclesia receptos, quo fieri potuisse, ut quem priora concilia minime recepissent, eum posteriora confirmarent," *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁴"Hieronymus quippe (ut Ioannes Cocleus vere dixit) in enumeratione canonicorum librorum veteris testamenti, Iosephum secutus est. . . . Nam ecclesia gentium columna est et firmamentum veritatis," *ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴⁵"Quod verò Ruffinus asserit, ex patrum traditione eos libros a canone reiiciendos (pace lectoris dictum sit), patrum traditiones ignoravit," *ibid.*

⁴⁶"negamus hos libros a Synagoga esse reiectos. Aliud est enim non recipere, alio vero reiicere. Iudaei ergo intra suum canonem hos quidem libros publica auctoritate minime receperunt: tametsi nonnulli etiam ex eis divinos et sacros esse crediderunt," *ibid.*, p. 47.

canonical.⁴⁷ It is ridiculous to assume that the conciliar lists of Carthage and Florence admit distinctions of authority; if this were true, neither pope nor council could determine which books are truly sacred.⁴⁸ The denial of canonicity to the New Testament books is not only wrong, but in many cases heretical, for such opinions are clearly contrary to church practice as well as the official decisions of the church, most recently voiced at Trent.⁴⁹ While Cano has kind words for Cajetan and reproaches Catharinus for the severity of his attack,⁵⁰ it is nevertheless striking that Cano, like Catharinus, appears more concerned to refute Cajetan's arguments than those of the reformers. Like Catharinus, Cano refers to Trent's decision only infrequently, preferring to rest his case on the earlier authoritative judgments of councils and popes.

Sixtus of Sienna discusses the problems of the canon very openly in his monumental Bibliotheca Sancta of 1566.⁵¹ Sixtus classified the

⁴⁷After listing the testimonies of several popes and councils, ibid., pp. 47-51, Cano concludes that the Council of Carthage and Innocent I have followed "the common opinion of the ancients," and, "Nec proinde tamen in libris canonicis enumerandis errare potuere, quippe quod ad fidem attinere certum sit," p. 51.

⁴⁸"Praeterea, cum sub eodem contextu omnes illi libri nullo facto discrimine definiantur esse canonici, ridiculum est ut partim in una significatione, partim in alia, libros canonicos habeamus. Ac si hanc semel distinctionem admittimus, auctoritate conciliorum atque pontificum nullus liber sacer constare poterit," ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁹See, e.g., ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 48, 52, and 58.

⁵¹Sixtus Senensi, Bibliotheca Sancta ex praecipuis catholicae ecclesiae autoribus collecta, et in octo libros digesta (Venetiis: Apud Franciscum Franciscum Senensem, 1566).

For a discussion of Sixtus' exegetical work, see John Warwick Montgomery, "Sixtus of Sienna and Roman Catholic Biblical Scholarship in the Reformation Period," Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, LIV (1963), 214-234.

canonical books of both Testaments into two classes, and in so doing, created a terminology that has been employed by the church ever since.

Sixtus writes:

Canonical books of the first order, which may be called proto-canonical, are those of unquestionable trustworthiness; that is, there has never been any doubt or controversy in the catholic church concerning their authority, but from the beginning of the early church they have always been received by the common consensus of all orthodox fathers, and have been used for confirming the authority of our faith.⁵²

Sixtus continues:

Canonical books of the second order (which were formerly called ecclesiastical, and which we now call deuterocanonical) are those concerning which the opinion among Catholics has sometimes been divided, because they did not come to the knowledge of the whole church constantly from apostolic times, but long afterwards.⁵³

As deuterocanonical writings, Sixtus lists the following: Esther, Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, additions to Daniel, I and II Maccabees, the last chapter of Mark, sections in Luke twenty-three and John eight, Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, Jude, the Apocalypse, and "other books of the same kind." Sixtus notes that the earliest fathers considered these books to be "apocryphal and non-canonical" and permitted them to be read only to catechumens. At a later time, they enjoyed higher esteem and were called "ecclesiastical" because they were read in the church and used to instruct

⁵²"Canonici primi ordinis, quos Protocanonicos appellare libet, sunt indubitatae fidei libri; hoc est, de quorum autoritate nulla unquam in Ecclesia catholica fuit dubitatio, aut controversia; sed statim ab initio nascentis Ecclesiae communi omnium orthodoxorum patrum consensu fuerunt recepti, et ad confirmandam fidei nostrae auctoritatem assumpti," Bibliotheca, p. 10.

⁵³"Canonici secundi ordinis (qui olim Ecclesiastici vocabantur, et nunc a nobis Deuterocanonici dicuntur) illi sunt de quibus, quia non statim sub ipsis Apostolorum temporibus, sed longe post ad notitiam totius Ecclesiae pervenerunt, inter Catholicos fuit aliquando sententia anceps," ibid.

the people, although not for the confirmation of dogmas. And finally, he observes, they have merited being numbered "among the scriptures of unquestionable authority."⁵⁴ Sixtus is careful to note that the distinction between the two orders is one of "cognition and time, not of authority, certitude, or worth, for both orders received their excellency and majesty from the same Holy Spirit."⁵⁵

Sixtus also discusses a third class of books called apocrypha. This word may be used to describe books whose author is uncertain; in that sense, "even some of the canonical books can be apocrypha," because the church is uncertain of some human authors. Books may also be called apocryphal if they are of uncertain authority. Sixtus explains that

the church fathers did not know with certainty or dare to define them as written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and on that account did not want them to be used either for confirming the dogmas of the Christian faith or for public reading in the church to edify the people, but permitted them to be read privately and at home.⁵⁶

Included in this category are III and IV Esdras, III and IV Maccabees, and the appendices to Esther, Job, Psalms, Chronicles, and similar writings.

⁵⁴"Demum vero inter scripturas irrefragabilis autoritatis assumi voluerunt," ibid.

⁵⁵"Porro libri canonici tam veteris, quam novi testamenti, duobus inter se ordinibus distinguuntur: quorum alter prior est, alter posterior; prior, inquam, ac posterior non autoritate, aut certitudine, aut dignitate, (nam uterque praestantiam, maiestatemque suam ab eodem spiritu sancto accipit) sed cognitione, ac tempore: quibus duabus rebus sit, ut ordo alter praecedat, alter sequatur," ibid.

⁵⁶"quo sane modo contingere potest etiam aliquos ex canonicis libris esse apocryphos. . . .non certe sciuerint, nec definire ausuerint ecclesiastici patres, an essent a scriptoribus suis afflatu spiritus sancti conscriptae: et ob id noluerunt eas vel ad confirmationem dogmatum christianae fidei proferri, vel ad plebis aedificationem publicae in Ecclesia legi, et in templis pronuciari, sed privatim, et domitantum legi permiserunt," ibid.

Sixtus regarded the judgment of the church as the decisive criterion of canonicity, and held that the knowledge of the later church is superior to that of the early church in this matter. He utilizes especially the third council of Carthage and the testimony of Augustine to establish the canonicity of the Old Testament deuterocanonical books,⁵⁷ and frequently cites Jerome and the council of Laodicea for the same purpose in the New Testament.⁵⁸ Later in his book, denials of the canonicity of the deuterocanonical books are treated as heresies. Luther is attacked for his position on James and Hebrews, and, although their names are not mentioned, the positions of Erasmus and Cajetan are also rejected.⁵⁹ He is not disturbed that some books were not in the Hebrew canon, because "the holy church of Christ nevertheless receives them in the canon, and reads and honors them with the same veneration accorded the other holy books."⁶⁰ Jerome is clearly wrong when he says that such books were not received as canonical, since his contemporary Augustine says the opposite.⁶¹ Furthermore, when the fathers state that some of the Old

⁵⁷Cf., e.g., *ibid.*, p. 46, on the canonicity of Ecclesiasticus.

⁵⁸Cf., e.g., *ibid.*, p. 51, on the canonicity of Hebrews.

⁵⁹Books VII and VIII deal with twenty-three heresies pertaining to Holy Scripture. Seven of these heresies deal exclusively with the denial of canonicity to one or more books. Cajetan's views are rejected *passim* in these books; cf. p. 960, e.g., on the canonicity of Hebrews.

⁶⁰"nihil ipsis auctoritatis adimi, quia eos iudaei inter apocrypha computent. Licet enim eos Iudaeorum Synagog non recipiat, sancta tamen Christi ecclesia in Canone recipit: illosque pari veneratione cum aliis sanctis libris legit atque colit," *ibid.*, p. 1036.

⁶¹"Ad eam vero sententiam Hieronymi, . . . dicimus, verba eius sic sine ulla discretione considerata, non esse prorsus vera: quoniam Augustinus Hieronymo synchronos . . . utrunque in ordine canonicorum librorum enumerat," *ibid.*

Testament deuterocanonical books are not in the canon, many of them are either speaking about the Hebrew canon instead of the Christian canon, or they lived at a time before the canonicity of such books was fully recognized.⁶² For Sixtus, it is evident that the terms "protocanonical" and "deuterocanonical" did not denote a difference in rank or content, but rather reflected a historical judgment about the process by which the biblical books became canonical through the reception and judgment of the church.

The position taken by Jesuit Robert Cardinal Bellarmine in his 1576 disputation On the Word of God is similar to that of Sixtus, although he does not use the terms "protocanonical" and "deuterocanonical." He distinguishes three orders of books, the first of which comprises those books "concerning whose authority there has never been any dispute among Catholics."⁶³ The second order of books are "truly prophetic or apostolic, but their authority has not always been equally certain and established."⁶⁴ Books in the third class "have never been approved by the public judgment of the entire church, although many learned and distinguished men have at times included them in the number of divine

⁶²"plerosque ex iis non de canone Christianorum, sed de canone hebraeorum locutos. . . . Sed postquam diligenti facta discussione, hos libros divinos agnoverunt, tum eos in Canonem retulerunt, nobisque ita comprobatos reliquere, ut iam ultra non liceat de eorum certitudine dubitare," *ibid.*, p. 1047.

In this discussion, Sixtus emphasizes that the trustworthiness of the biblical books "non ab autore, sed ab ecclesiae catholicae auctoritate pendeat," *ibid.*, p. 1046.

⁶³Robert Bellarmine, "De Verbo Dei," Disputationum de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos (Neapoli: Apud Josephum Giuliano, 1856), I, 28.

⁶⁴"Deinde de iis qui tametsi vere prophetici, aut apostolici sint, non tamen semper aequae certa et explorata eorum auctoritas fuit," *ibid.*

books."⁶⁵ The contents of his three classes correspond to Sixtus' classification, except that Bellarmine adds the comma Johanneum to the second class, and the Prayer of Manasseh and the Shepherd of Hermas to the third class. He claims that the canonicity of all books in the first class has been established by "all the popes, all the councils, and all the fathers who have had occasion to enumerate the books."⁶⁶

Bellarmino next examines each of the books in the second class and seeks to refute arguments advanced against their canonicity. His chief argument is simply that "all the decrees of popes and councils certainly prove that this book is sacred and divine."⁶⁷ His argumentation for the Pauline authorship and canonicity of Hebrews is typical. This is proved, first, from the fact that "it is read as Pauline in the church on the day of the Lord's Nativity and at other times." Second, it was received as Pauline by many of the earliest popes, including Clement, Innocent I, and Gelasius. Third, it was "placed in the canon of sacred Scriptures as Pauline" by the councils of Laodicea, Carthage, and Trent. Fourth, it was "always received by all the Greek fathers." Fifth, it was received by all the Latins after Lactanius; the doubts of two or three Latins should not be preferred to "the most certain confession of all the others." Sixth, Peter mentions this epistle. And

⁶⁵"*quanquam a nonnullis clarissimis doctissimisque viris aliquando in numero divinorum voluminum haberentur, publico tamen totius Ecclesiae iudicio nunquam approbati sunt,*" ibid.

⁶⁶"*testes sunt omnes summi pontifices, omni concilia, omnes patres, qui quacunque de causa libros enumerare studuerunt,*" ibid.

⁶⁷"*At librum hunc [Esther] sacrum et divinum esse, satis certe probant omnia illa pontificum et conciliorum decreta,*" ibid., p. 34. Cf. also pp. 38, 40, and 58 for similar statements.

finally, the "consensus of all catholics" accepts this epistle as written by an apostolic man and as possessing apostolic authority.⁶⁸ With the possible exception of the sixth argument, all arguments appeal to the usage and authority of the church as decisive.

Bellarmino does not agree that the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament may be canonical, but of lower authority. Already the third council of Carthage declared them to be divine, which means that they possess "infallible truth" and equal authority.⁶⁹ Nor does the fact that certain books were once doubted mean that they must still be questioned, for the later church has ended those doubts on the basis of early testimony.⁷⁰ For the church to declare a book canonical, it is enough if she has some testimony from worthy men of the earliest times of the church.⁷¹ That the church lacks the testimony of the synagog

⁶⁸"Verum hanc epistolam et canonicam esse, et Pauli apostoli, facile probari potest. Primum, quoniam nomine apostoli Pauli legitur in Ecclesia in die Natalis Domini et alias frequenter. Secundo, quia producta in testimonium ac recepta est ut Pauli a multis antiquissimis pontificibus. . . .Tertio, quia ponitur in canone sacrarum scripturarum nomine Pauli a concilio Laodicensi, . . .Carthag. III, . . .et Trident. . . .Quarto, quoniam recepta fuit semper ab omnibus graecis patribus. . . .Quinto, recepta fuit etiam ab omnibus Latinis post Lactantium. . . .Non autem debet duorum aut trium Latinorum dubitatio anteponi certissimae confessioni omnium aliorum. Sexto, videtur b. Petrus hujus epistolae mentionem facere. . . .Postremo, epistola haec catholicorum omnium consensu, vel est Pauli, vel Lucae, vel Barnabae, vel Clementis romani. . . .sed quando etiam aut Lucae, aut Barnabae esset, apostolici viri esset, nec apostolica auctoritate carere deberet," *ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁹"Praeterea quod concilium Carthaginense, ex quo caetera concilia istum canonem desumpserunt, vocat hos libros non solum canonicos, sed etiam divinos: librum autem esse divinum quid alius est, quam divinam auctoritatem habere? . . .porro librum esse canonicum, est esse infallibilis veritatis," *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷¹"satis esse si habeat aliqua testimonia hominum fide dignorum illius temporis, vel certe proximi," *ibid.*

for some Old Testament books is true, but she has testimony from the apostolic church, and this suffices.⁷² Nor can the testimony of Jerome be used against the present position of the church, for he lived at a time "when a general council had not yet stated anything about these books."⁷³

The canonical treatment of Catharinus, Cano, Sixtus, and Bellarmine shows that the Tridentine dogma of the biblical canon was accepted without reservation.⁷⁴ The earlier doubts about certain books of the

⁷²"etsi enim non habeantur testimonia a synagoga Judaeorum, tamen habentur ab Ecclesia apostolica, et hoc sufficit," *ibid.*, p. 42.

⁷³"Hieronymum in ea fuisse opinione, quia nondum generale concilium de his libris aliquid statuerat," *ibid.*

⁷⁴The influence of the Tridentine decree on the canon is visible in the official editions of the Vulgate published in 1590 and 1592. The first of these editions was entitled: Biblia Sacra vulgatae editionis ad Concilii Tridentini praescriptum emendata et a Sixto V.P.M. recognita et approbata (Romae: Ex typographia Apostolica Vaticana, 1590). This so-called "Sixtine edition" follows the contents and order of Trent's decree without deviation. It is prefaced with the bull "Aeternus ille" by Pope Sixtus V, in which stern measures were threatened against anyone who tampered with the contents. This bull notes that "apocrypha reiecimus, autentica retinuimus," and includes among the former III and IV Esdras, III Maccabees, and the Prayer of Manasseh.

Notwithstanding the threats of the bull, another official edition appeared in 1592 after the death of Sixtus V. It was entitled: Biblia Sacra vulgatae editionis Sixti Quinti Pont. Max. iussu recognita atque edita (Romae: Ex typographia Apostolica Vaticana, 1592). This so-called "Sixtine-Clementine edition," which has since been regarded as the official edition, made many changes in the text of the 1590 edition, added a preface by Cardinal Bellarmine, and included an appendix containing III and IV Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. These books were preceded by the following introduction: "Oratio Manassae, necnon Libri duo, qui sub libri Tertii et Quarti Esdrae nomine circumferuntur, hoc in loco, extra scilicet seriem Canonicorum Librorum, quos sancta Tridentina Synodus suscepit, et pro Canonicis suscipiendos decrevit, sepositi sunt, ne prorsus interirent, quippe qui a nonnullis sanctis Patribus interdum citantur, et in aliquibus Bibliis Latinis tam manuscriptis quam impressis reperiuntur."

For a useful description of both editions, see T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, compilers, Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society, II 2, (London: The Bible House, 1911), 958-963, nos. 6181 and 6184.

Old and New Testaments were reported only as a historical fact which the greater knowledge of the later church had overcome in declaring all questioned books to be canonical. It could be acknowledged that for nearly four centuries only the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament had been received as canonical, for the important factor was that the church had eventually come to venerate also other books as divine. In describing the church's authority with regard to the canon, post-Tridentine Catholicism accented the power of popes and councils even more than had the pre-Tridentine polemicists. In late sixteenth century Catholicism, the officially fixed canon and the chief criterion of canonicity differed remarkably little from the canon and criteriology of St. Augustine. But now the extent of the canon had become a dogma, critics of one or more books in that canon had become heretics, and the more critical tendency in her own tradition had been suppressed by ecclesiastical decision.

Reformed Theology

Pre-Tridentine Reformed theology did not grant full authority to the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, but applied only a minimum of criticism toward the antilegomena of the New Testament. The criticism of some of the antilegomena practiced by the earliest Swiss reformers and evident in their first Bible editions was no longer emphasized in the late thirties. The conviction had developed that the twenty-seven book New Testament and the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament represented the totality of books inspired by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and apostles. It remained for John Calvin, the leading Reformed theologian of the century, to articulate what other reformers, both Luther and Reformed, had often expressed less

systematically, namely, that the authority and credibility of Holy Scripture depends on the witness of the Holy Spirit rather than the judgment of the church. This argument was set forth in every edition of the Institutes after 1539, apparently in reaction to the opposite claim of Cochlaeus, Eck and other Roman Catholic polemicists.⁷⁵

After setting forth the thesis that the Lord has hallowed his truth to everlasting remembrance in the Scriptures alone and that the "Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven,"⁷⁶ Calvin proceeds to attack as a "most pernicious error" the Roman Catholic contention "that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church." He continues:

For they mock the Holy Spirit when they ask: Who can convince us that these writings came from God? Who can assure us that Scripture has come down whole and intact even to our very day? Who can persuade us to receive one book in reverence but to exclude another, unless

⁷⁵John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by Ford Lewis Battles and edited by John T. McNeill, in The Library of Christian Classics, XX and XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960). Hereafter cited as LCC, XX and XXI. This translation is based on the 1559 edition of the Institutes. For the Roman Catholic sources of Calvin's opposition, see the editorial notes in LCC, XX, 74-82, and LCC, XXI, 1152-1180.

Our citations of the original text are taken from Institutio Christianae Religionis 1559, ediderunt Petrus Barth et Guilelmus Niesel, in Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta, III et V (Monachii: Chr. Kaiser, 1928 and 1936). Hereafter cited as OS, III and V.

For useful discussions of Calvin's doctrine of Scripture, see the following: Rupert E. Davies, The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), pp. 93-153; J. K. S. Reid, The Authority of Scripture (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1957), pp. 29-55; J. T. McNeill, "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin," Church History, XXVIII (1959), 140-145; and B. A. Gerrish, "Biblical Authority and the Continental Reformation," Scottish Journal of Theology, X (1957), 337-360.

⁷⁶Calvin, Institutes, I, vii, 1; LCC, XX, 74; OS, III, 65, 14-15: "non alio iure plenam auctoritatem obtinent, quam ubi statuunt e caelo fluxisse."

the church prescribe a sure rule for all these matters? What reverence is due Scripture and what books ought to be reckoned within its canon depend, they say, upon the determination of the church. Thus these sacrilegious men, wishing to impose an unbridled tyranny under the cover of the church, do not care with what absurdities they ensnare themselves and others, provided they can force this one idea upon the simple-minded: that the church has authority in all things.⁷⁷

Calvin contends that this principle would make the assurance of faith depend solely "upon the good pleasure of men." But the opposite is true: the church is itself grounded upon Holy Scripture. The teaching of the apostles and prophets is the foundation of the church "and must have had authority before the church began to exist." Nor do the writings of the apostles and prophets remain in doubt until decided by the church.

For if the Christian church was from the beginning founded upon the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles, wherever this doctrine is found, the acceptance of it -- without which the church itself would never have existed -- must certainly have preceded the church.⁷⁸

To be sure, "the church receives and gives its seal of approval to the Scriptures," but it does not thereby "render authentic what is otherwise doubtful or controversial."⁷⁹ Rather the church recognizes the Scriptures to be the truth of its own God and unhesitatingly venerates them "as a pious duty." To ask how one can know that the Scriptures have come from God without the decree of the church is like asking how to distinguish light from darkness or white from black. For "Scripture exhibits fully

⁷⁷Ibid.: LCC, XX, 75; OS, III, 65-66.

⁷⁸Institutes, I, vii, 2; LCC, XX, 75-76; OS, III, 66, 23-27: "Nam si Christiana Ecclesia Prophetarum scriptis, et Apostolorum praedicatione initio fundata fuit, ubicunque reperietur ea doctrina, Ecclesiam certe praecessit eius approbatio: sine qua nunquam Ecclesia ipsa extitisset."

⁷⁹Ibid.: LCC, XX, 76; OS, III, 66, 30-31: "Quare dum illam recipit, ac suffragio suo obsignat, non ex dubia aut alioqui controversia authenticam reddit."

as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste."⁸⁰

Calvin argues that Augustine's assertion that he would not believe the Gospel unless convinced by the authority of the church was never intended to make our confidence in Scripture depend on the assent or judgment of the church. What Augustine meant is that "the authority of the church is an introduction through which we are prepared for faith in the gospel."⁸¹ Calvin carefully explains that the witness of the Holy Spirit is stronger than all proof, even though many proofs could be adduced. He continues:

For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.⁸²

For those whom the Spirit has inwardly taught, Scripture is "self-authenticated"; it "seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit."⁸³ Unless this certainty is present,

⁸⁰Ibid., OS, III, 67, 5-7; "Non enim obscuriorem veritatis suae sensum ultro Scriptura prae se fert, quam coloris sui albae ac nigrae: saporis, suaves et amarae."

⁸¹Institutes, I, vii, 3; LCC, XX, 77; OS, III, 68, 9-10: "Ecclesiae auctoritatem isagogen esse qua ad fidem Evangelii praeparatur."

⁸²Institutes, I, vii, 4; LCC, XX, 79; OS, III, 79, 2-8: "Nam secuti Deus solus de se idoneus est testis in suo sermone: ita etiam non ante fidem reperiet sermo in hominum cordibus quam interiore Spiritus testimonio obsignetur. Idem ergo Spiritus qui per os Prophetarum loquutus est, in corda nostra penetret necesse est, ut persuadeat fideliter protulisse quod divinitus erat mandatum."

⁸³Institutes, I, vii, 5; LCC, XX, 80; OS, III, 70, 16-20: "tunc tamen demum serio nos afficit quum per Spiritum obsignata est cordibus nostris."

it is useless to attempt to establish it by arguments or "by the common agreement of the church," for "its authority will always remain in doubt." Only after such inward certainty is achieved do arguments for the divinity and authority of Holy Scripture become "very useful aids."⁸⁴

Calvin later discusses at greater length the power of the church with regard to articles of faith. Just as the prophets and apostles were authorized to teach and report only "the commands of Him by whom they have been sent," so also the power of the church "is not infinite but subject to the Lord's Word and, as it were, enclosed within it."⁸⁵ Rejecting the Roman claim that councils cannot err in establishing articles of faith, Calvin denies that the church's guidance by the Holy Spirit enables it to "ordain anything beyond or apart from God's Word."⁸⁶ One may speak of the infallibility of the church in matters of salvation only "in so far as the church, having forsaken all its own wisdom, allows itself to be taught by the Holy Spirit through God's Word." And this, Calvin points out, is the decisive difference: "Our opponents locate the authority of the church outside God's Word; but we insist that it be attached to the Word, and do not allow it to be separated from it."⁸⁷

⁸⁴Institutes, I, viii, 1; LCC, XX, 81-82; OS, III, 71-72. The remainder of Chapter VIII discusses several proofs for the credibility of Holy Scripture.

⁸⁵Institutes, IV, viii, 4; LCC, XXI, 1152; OS, V, 136, 11-23: "Ne garriant quicquid collibitum fuerit: sed mandata eius a quo missi sunt. . . . Non est igitur Ecclesiae potestas infinita, sed subiecta verbo Domini, et in eo quasi inclusa."

⁸⁶Institutes, IV, viii, 13; LCC, XXI, 1162; OS, V, 146, 24.

⁸⁷Ibid.; OS, V, 146, 25-31: "Nos si demus illud primum, errare non posse ecclesiam in rebus ad salutem necessariis: hic sensus noster est, ideo hoc esse, quod abdicata omni sua sapientia, a Spiritu sancto doceri se per verbum Dei, patitur. . . . Illi Ecclesiae auctoritatem extra verbum Dei collocant: nos autem volumus verbo annexam, nec ab eo separari patimur."

The subjection of the oracles of God to the judgment of men is a "blasphemy unfit to be mentioned." Moreover, Calvin asks his Roman opponents, which conciliar decree teaches that "the authority of Scripture is grounded in the approval of the church?" Why did Arius allow himself to be overcome at the Council of Nicea with Scriptural testimonies, since no canonical list had yet been adopted by a general council? Furthermore, the canon of Scripture "was little agreed on among ancient writers." However, if the Romanists were willing to listen to Jerome, which they cannot bear to do, "the books of Maccabees, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and the like, are to be thrown back into the rank of Apocrypha."⁸⁸ Although the foregoing remarks indicate that Calvin did not regard certain Old Testament books as fully canonical, their chief point is to reinforce his central emphasis: the divinity and authority of Holy Scripture is not established by ecclesiastical judgment, but by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

Calvin was one of the first reformers to reply to the Council of Trent. In his Antidote of 1547, Calvin took issue with the Tridentine decree on canonical Scripture issued the year before.⁸⁹ He lists four

⁸⁸Institutes, IV, ix, 14; LCC, XXI, 1178-1179; OS, V, 163, 15-23: "Si in Ecclesiae approbatione fundata est Scripturae autoritas, cuius Concili citabunt de ea re decretum: Nullum, opinor, habent. . . .Video enim inter veteres id parum constitisse. Et si valere debet quod ait Hieronymus, libri Machaberoum, Tobias, Ecclesiasticus, et similes in ordinem apocryphorum, reiciuntur: quod isti nullo modo facere sustinent."

⁸⁹John Calvin, "Acts of the Council of Trent with the Antidote," Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith, translated by Henry Beveridge and annotated by Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), III, 17-188. Hereafter cited as Antidote.

Citations of the original text are from "Acta Synodi Tridentinae. Cum Antidoto," Tractatus Theologici Minores III, in Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia, ediderunt Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, et Eduardus Reuss (Brunsvigae: Apud C. A. Schwetschke et filium, 1868), VII, 365-506. This edition of Calvin's works is hereafter cited as CO.

main objections:

First, they ordain that in doctrine we are not to stand on Scripture alone, but also on things handed down by tradition. Secondly, in forming a catalogue of Scripture, they mark all the books with the same chalk, and insist on placing the Apocrypha in the same rank with the others. Thirdly, repudiating all other versions whatsoever, they retain the Vulgate only, and order it to be authentic. Lastly, in all passages either dark or doubtful, they claim the right of interpretation without challenge.⁹⁰

He exclaims: "These four things being established, who can deny that the war is ended?"⁹¹ With this decree, Calvin asserts, the spirit of Trent wished "that Scripture should only signify to us whatever dreaming monks might choose."⁹²

Calvin's criticisms of the Tridentine canon reveal his own attitude toward the Old Testament canon. Trent's acceptance of the Old Testament apocrypha raises two problems: Trent has given them an authority which they never had before, and Rome will use them to prove false doctrines.

Calvin states:

They provide themselves with new supports when they give full authority to the Apocryphal books. Out of the second of the Maccabees they will prove Purgatory and the worship of saints; out of Tobit satisfactions, exorcisms, and what not. From Ecclesiasticus they will borrow not a little. For from whence could they better draw their dregs? I am not one of those, however, who would entirely disapprove the reading of those books; but in giving them an authority which they never before possessed, what end was sought but just to have the use of spurious paint in colouring their errors?⁹³

⁹⁰Antidote, pp. 67-68; CO, VII, 411: "...Deinde, in conficiendo scripturae catalogo eadem libros omnes creta notant: et apocryphos vetant ex aliorum ordine submoveri."

⁹¹Antidote, p. 68; CO, VII, 411.

⁹²Antidote, p. 76; CO, VII, 417-418.

⁹³Antidote, p. 68; CO, VII, 411: "Adde, quod sibi nova suffragia comparant, quum libros apocryphos autoritate dignantur. . . . Quanquam non is sum qui lectionem horum librorum velim prorsus improbare: sed fidem illis tribuere, quae hactenus nunquam habita fuit, quorsum attinebat, nisi ad colorandos suos errores adulterino fuco uterentur?"

The inclusion of these books in the canon "is done against the consent of the primitive Church," as we learn from Jerome and Rufinus, who held that they "might indeed be read to the people, but were not entitled to establish doctrine."⁹⁴ Calvin recognizes that Trent's list was published already by the Council of Carthage and St. Augustine, but the latter clearly indicates that the churches of his age did not all have the same view, so we may conclude that "the point was then undecided." Calvin departs from this historical argument to add that if the matter were to be decided "from the case itself," phraseology and other factors would indicate that these books which Trent raises so high "must sink to a lower place." As one example of inferior content and style, Calvin notes that the author of Maccabees expresses the wish "that he may have written well and congruously, but if not, he asks pardon. How very alien this acknowledgment from the majesty of the Holy Spirit!"⁹⁵ Thus the Antidote reveals that Calvin valued the apocryphal writings, as he called them, but did not consider them equal in authority to the other Scriptures. His criteria for this judgment are drawn from the history, doctrinal content, and phraseology of these books, while negatively, he again rejects the claim of the church to give these books divine authority.

From his commentaries on Hebrews and the catholic epistles written

⁹⁴ Antidote, p. 70; CO, VII, 413: "De libris omnibus in canonem promiscue receptis non dicam aliud, nisi praeter ecclesiae veteris consensum id fieri. . . . qui ad populum quidem legerentur, sed ad fidem dogmatum faciendam non valerent."

⁹⁵ Antidote, pp. 70-71; CO, VII, 413: "Quod si argumentis ex re ipsa sumptis pugnandum sit, praeter phrasin ipsem, multa ostendent debere inferiore loco subsidere, quae Tridentini patres in altum extollunt. . . . Quantum, obsecro, a spiritus sancti maiestate aliena est haec confessio."

in 1549 and 1551, we learn that Calvin's attitude toward some of the New Testament antilegomena was more positive, but not without a measure of criticism. He knows the early doubts about Hebrews, and that it was "only at a later period that it was received by the Latin Churches."⁹⁶ He is convinced that Paul is not its author, because the manner of teaching, style, and setting suggest otherwise, nor is it likely that the epistle was first written in Hebrew, as many have suggested.⁹⁷ But its uncertain authorship should not greatly worry us, for no other book "speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ." The church of Christ should "firmly defend the possession" of this epistle rather than "be deprived of so great a benefit." It is "through the craft of Satan that any have been led to dispute its authority," and it should be classed "without hesitation among the apostolical writings."⁹⁸

From the writings of Jerome and Eusebius, Calvin knew that the epistle of James "was not formerly received by many churches without opposition." Although some of his contemporaries "do not think it entitled to authority," Calvin is nevertheless "inclined to receive it

⁹⁶John Calvin, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter, translated by W. F. Johnston and edited by D. W. and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 1; hereafter cited as Hebrews. Calvin's title did not include the words "of Paul to the Hebrews" as the title page of this edition implies.

Citations of the original text of Calvin's commentaries on Hebrews and the catholic epistles are taken from CO, LV, 5-500.

⁹⁷Hebrews, pp. 1-2; CO, LV, 5-6.

⁹⁸Hebrews, p. 1; CO, LV, 5: "Ego vero eam inter apostolicas sine controversia amplector: nec dubito Satanae fuisse quondam factum ut illi auctoritatem quidam detraherent. Nullus enim est ex sacris libris qui de Christi sacerdotio tam luculente disserat. . . . Quare ne patiamur Dei ecclesiam et nos ipsos tanto bono spoliare: sed eius possessionem constanter nobis asseramus."

without controversy, because I see no just cause for rejecting it."⁹⁹

He disagrees with Luther's objection that James contradicts the Pauline doctrine of justification, for Paul talks about the "gratuitous imputation of righteousness before the tribunal of God," while James discusses "the manifestation of righteousness by the conduct."¹⁰⁰ Calvin acknowledges that James seems to be "more sparing in proclaiming the grace of Christ than it behoved an Apostle to be," but counters that it is surely not "required of all to handle the same arguments" and that "this diversity should not make us to approve of one, and to condemn the other."¹⁰¹ Calvin is uncertain whether the author was James of Jerusalem or the son of Alphaeus, but in either case he belonged to the disciples of Christ.¹⁰² But regardless of the author, "it is enough to make men receive this Epistle, that it contains nothing unworthy of an Apostle of Christ."¹⁰³

II Peter posed serious problems for Calvin. He knew the early doubts about this epistle from Eusebius, and was familiar with Jerome's account of its stylistic difference from I Peter. Calvin agrees with

⁹⁹John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, translated and edited by John Owen (Reprint of the 1855 edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 276; hereafter cited as Epistles.

CO, LV, 381: "Sunt etiam hodie nonnulli qui eam autoritate dignam non censeant. Ego tamen, qui nullam eius repudiandae satis iustam causam video, libenter eam sine controversia amplector."

¹⁰⁰Epistles, p. 315; CO, LV, 406.

¹⁰¹Epistles, p. 276; CO, LV, 381: "Quod autem parciore in praedicanda Christi gratia videtur, quam apostolo conveniat: certe non est ab omnibus exigendum ut idem argumentum tractent. . . . Atqui non facit haec diversitas ut alterum probando, alterum damnemus."

¹⁰²Epistles, p. 277; CO, LV, 382.

¹⁰³Epistles, p. 276; CO, LV, 381: "Quare mihi ad epistolam hanc recipiendam satis est, quod nihil continet Christi apostolo indignum."

this judgment, for he cannot "here recognise the language of Peter," and states that he has allowed himself "the liberty of using the word Peter or Apostle indiscriminately."¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, "according to the consent of all, it has nothing unworthy of Peter, as it shews everywhere the power and grace of an apostolic spirit."¹⁰⁵ If the letter is received as canonical, however, "we must allow Peter to be the author," for it would have been a "fiction unworthy of a minister of Christ" to have impersonated another individual. Calvin solves this dilemma by affirming its canonicity and Petrine origin; "not that he himself wrote it, but that some one of his disciples set forth in writing, by his command, those things which the necessity of the times required."¹⁰⁶

Although he is aware of the "dispute among the ancients" with regard to Jude, Calvin willingly includes it among the canonical writings. He gives two brief reasons for his decision: it was "received as authentic formerly by some of the best," and "it contains nothing inconsistent with the purity of apostolic doctrine."¹⁰⁷ Calvin's opinions on the canonicity

¹⁰⁴Epistles, p. 364; CO, LV, 441: "utcunque genuinam Petri phrasin hic non agnoscam. Caeterum quia de autore non constat, nunc Petri, nunc apostoli nomine promiscue uti mihi permittant."

¹⁰⁵Epistles, p. 363; CO, LV, 441: "Interim omnium consensu, adeo nihil habet Petro indignum, ut vim spiritus apostolici et gratiam ubique exprimat."

¹⁰⁶Ibid., "Quod si pro canonica recipitur, Petrum eius autorem fateri oportet: quando non tantum nomen eius inscriptum habet, sed ipse etiam testatur cum Christo se vixisse. Haec autem fictio indigna esset ministro Christi, obtendere alienam personam. Sic igitur constituo, si digna fide censetur epistola, a Petro fuisse profectam: non quod eam scripserit ipse, sed quod unus ex discipulis, ipsius mandato complexus fuerit quae temporum necessitas exigebat."

¹⁰⁷Epistles, p. 427; CO, LV, 485-486: "Tametsi de hac quoque epistola diversis sententiis inter veteres certatum fuit: quia tamen utilis est lectu, nec quidquam a doctrinae apostolicae puritate alienum continet, iamque olim apud optimos quosque auctoritatem obtinuit, eam libenter aliis adnumero."

of II and III John and the Apocalypse can only be conjectured, inasmuch as he neither wrote commentaries on these books nor elsewhere expressed a judgment on their canonicity.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, Calvin favored the inclusion of the comma Iohanneum because he mistakenly believed that "it is found in the best and most approved copies" of the epistle; however, he explained the context as though the apostle referred only to earthly witnesses, "inasmuch as all do not receive this reading."¹⁰⁹

Calvin's criteriology of canonicity were not unlike those of Luther. He did not begin the task of canonical selection anew, but carried on his criticism within the received canon. He accepted the judgment of Jerome and others that only books in the Hebrew canon were fully authoritative. In the New Testament, he examined the antilegomena primarily from the standpoint of content. Finding nothing contrary to the apostolic doctrine taught elsewhere in canonical Scripture, he decided in favor of their canonicity even though he was uncertain of their authorship. In no case, however, did Calvin propose an author who was not one of the early disciples. In all books of the received canon, Calvin's doctrine of the internal testimony of the Spirit emphasized that the personal conviction of Scripture's divinity and authority is not effected by the judgment of the church, but by the operation of God's Spirit upon the human heart.

Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, took an even more conservative position toward the New Testament antilegomena than had

¹⁰⁸ Leipoldt, p. 148.

¹⁰⁹ Epistles, pp. 257-258; CO, LV, 365: "et video in optimis ac probatissimae fidei codicibus haberi, ego quoque libenter amplector. . . . quia non omnes forte lectionem hanc recipient."

Calvin. Beza's Latin translation of the New Testament, which first appeared in 1556, was accompanied by prefaces to the various books in which he briefly discussed the canonicity of the questioned books.¹¹⁰

Hebrews is neither Pauline nor was it written in Hebrew, but its content is so outstanding that it suffices to know that it was truly dictated by the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹ Beza is familiar with the early doubts about

the other antilegomena, but alludes to them only briefly. James not only does not oppose the Pauline doctrine of justification, but confirms it.¹¹² Beza discusses the Apocalypse at greater length, criticizing

particularly the objections of Erasmus, and suggesting John Mark as its possible author. Regardless of its authorship, Beza asserts that its content is manifestly that of the prophetic spirit because it teaches the divinity of Christ and emphasizes his work of redemption.¹¹³ Con-

siderations of content thus counted more heavily for Beza than the

¹¹⁰Novum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Testamentum. Latine iam olim a Vetere interprete, nunc denuo a Theodor Beza versum: cum eiusdem annotationibus, in quibus ratio interpretationis redditur (Geneva: Robertus Stephanus, 1556).

Beza's New Testament was accompanied in this edition by an Old Testament using the text of Pagninus for the canonical books, and that of the Complutensian Polyglot for the apocryphal books. See Darlow and Moule, II 2, 941, no. 6140, for additional information on this edition.

¹¹¹"nec Pauli esse, nec Hebraica unquam fuisse scriptam appareat. . . Sufficiat hoc nosse, vere esse dictatam a Spiritu sancto, quae luculentissimam ac plane Apostolicam Veteris foederis cum Novo collationem atque adeo Novi foederis veluti singularem quandam promulgationem ac sanctionem complectatur," *ibid.*, p. 284.

¹¹²"Quamobrem tantum abest ut haec epistola Pauli doctrinae repugnet, ut contra nec melior nec certiore argumento possit confirmari," *ibid.*, p. 302.

¹¹³"quum manifesta et magnificentissima ubique tum divinitatis Christi, tum nostrae redemptionis testimonia in eo extare videam. . . . venio in eam sententiam ut existimem Spiritum sanctum in hunc pretiosissimum librum congerere voluisse quae ex superiorum Prophetarum praedictionibus implendae post Christi adventum supererant," *ibid.*, p. 313.

doubts of the early church. The agreement of the questioned books with the content of the homologoumena was a strong indication that they too had been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

In his dogmatics of 1560, Wolfgang Musculus maintained that only the Hebrew canon in the Old Testament and the homologoumena in the New Testament are truly canonical.¹¹⁴ Such books are "approved in matters of faith and religion," while the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament and the antilegomena of the New Testament are apocryphal and of lesser authority.¹¹⁵ Musculus appeals chiefly to the testimony of Jerome for his judgment on the Old Testament, and to ecclesiastical usage for his verdict on the New Testament. The Old Testament apocrypha were excluded by the Jews because they did not appear to be inspired or to conform with the known canonical writings.¹¹⁶ Musculus does not feel qualified to discuss the authorship of the antilegomena, but states simply that their questioned status in the early church has caused him to feel less bound to them than to the others, although he finds nothing in them worthy of condemnation.¹¹⁷ Musculus treats the canon as a

¹¹⁴ Wolfgang Musculus, Loci Communes in usus sacrae Theologiae candidatorum parati (Basileae: Ex officina Hervagiano, 1560), II Tomi. We have used the copy in Case Memorial Library, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Conn.

¹¹⁵ "Canonicae pro authenticis habentur, in causa fidei ac religionis comprobanda: quae extra canonem et apocrypha sunt, auctoritatem hanc non sunt assequutae," ibid., I, 220.

¹¹⁶ "Exclusi vero sunt a canone, quod magis 'anthropopneustos' quam 'theopneustos' scripti, et quaedam canonicis scripturis non satis conformia habere videntur," ibid., p. 221.

¹¹⁷ "Meae modestiae non est, ut de illis pronunciem, sint ne eorum sub quorum nominibus extant, vel secus. Iudicia tamen veterum hoc efficiunt, ut minus sim illis quam caeteris scripturis astrictus, licet haud facile quaevis damnanda censeam, quae in illis leguntur," ibid.

closed issue, insisting that the Holy Spirit wanted a certain canon for determining the Christian faith.¹¹⁸ He is sensitive to the Roman claim that the church bestows authority on the Scripture, insisting that the Word preceded the church and is superior to it.¹¹⁹ That his argumentation is nevertheless based in part on the testimony of the early church, Musculus explains, is because the Roman Catholics argue in this way and he chooses to defeat them with their own weapons.¹²⁰

Peter Martyr Vermillius deals with the last point at greater length in his dogmatics of 1576.¹²¹ He describes as "a most dangerous error of the Antichrists" the belief that the church gives authority to the divine books, for whatever authority the church possesses it has only from the Word of God.¹²² But the church nevertheless has an important role in the canonization of Scripture by serving as a witness to the sacred books in promulgating and preaching their contents.¹²³ It also "discerns the pure and genuine books of divine letters from the adulterated and

¹¹⁸"In hunc usum voluit spiritus sanctus extare certum divinarum scripturarum canonem, ad quem omnia in religione Dei vel credenda, vel aversanda examinentur," *ibid.*, p. 224.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹Peter Martyr Vermillius, *Loci Communes*, edidit Robertus Massonius (Editio nova; Heidelberg: Sumptibus Danielis et Davidis Aubriorum, 1622). We have used the copy in Case Memorial Library, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Conn.

¹²²"Est ergo magnopere cavendus Antichristorum periculosissimus error, qui dicere audent Ecclesiam esse, quae divinis libris auctoritatem conciliarit, cum longe secus res habeat. Quicquid enim auctoritatis et existimationis Ecclesiae contigit, id totum a verbo Dei profectum est," *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹²³"ut eam confitear tanquam testem, sacros libros asservare. . . . ut sermones a Deo sibi commissos promulget ac praedicat," *ibid.*

apocryphal."¹²⁴ But in its role as a "witness and faithful preserver of the divine books," the church is not superior to Scripture and ought not to "prefer its own faith or authority to the divine letters."¹²⁵

Vermillius goes on to explain that the authority of Scripture depends on God, not men, and that the Word is prior to the church and calls it into existence. This happens when the Word is preached and the Holy Spirit awakens the hearts of the hearers so that they recognize the message as divine. The Word of God therefore has its authority from the Spirit, not from the church.¹²⁶ When Augustine affirmed that he would not have believed the Gospel without the authority of the church, he had reference to the ministry of the church "which proposes, preaches, and inculcates the Gospel to the faithful."¹²⁷ Vermillius thus acknowledged an important, but limited role of the primitive church in the process of canonization.

¹²⁴"synceros et germanos libros divinarum literarum ab adulterinis et Apocryphis discernat, quod utique non est autoritate superiori pollere, ut multi stulte somniant," *ibid.*, p. 20. Commenting on Augustine's often discussed statement, Vermillius states, *ibid.*: "Hoc est itaque, quod Ecclesia nos commovet ad credendum Evangelio, quia sacras literas bona fide custodit, praedicat, et ab alienis discernit."

¹²⁵"testis quidem est et fida conservatrix divinorum codicum, qui tamen haud permittitur, ut aliud quippiam constituat atque Deus his literis definiverit. . . . Ita Ecclesia non debet ista de causa suam fidem, vel auctoritatem divinis literis praeferre," *ibid.*

¹²⁶"Id non esse verum quod assument, Scripturam habere auctoritatem ab Ecclesia. Eius enim firmitas a Deo pendet, non ab hominibus: et prius est Verbum, et quidem firmum ac certum, quam Ecclesia. Nam Ecclesia per verbum vocata fuit. Et spiritus Dei egit in cordibus audientium verbum et illud legentium: ut agnoscerent non esse humanum sermonem, sed prorsus divinum. A Spiritu itaque accessit autoritas verbo Dei, non ab Ecclesia," *ibid.*, p. 384.

¹²⁷"multum tribuendum esset ministerio Ecclesiae, quae fidelibus proponit, praedicat, inculcat Evangelium," *ibid.*

The attitude of several Reformed churches toward the biblical canon also found expression in their confessional writings. The Zürich Confession of 1545 was the only Helvetic confession to contain a list of the accepted books of both Testaments. Although it refused to place the apocryphal books of the Old Testament on the same level with the others, the confession maintained that such books are not to be rejected or condemned, for they have been read in the church for many years and are still useful and fruitful.¹²⁸ With obvious reference to Luther, the confession observes that the New Testament books present no difficult problems and contain nothing "strawy." Although some people have difficulty accommodating themselves to books like the Apocalypse, the confessors hold that such accommodation is necessary, for the Scripture judges man, not man the Scriptures.¹²⁹ The confession finally notes that Scripture has its authority, truth, and perfection in itself, and does not first acquire this from the church.¹³⁰

The Confessio Gallicana of 1559, based on a draft prepared by Calvin, Beza, and Viret, also contained a statement on the biblical

¹²⁸E. F. Karl Müller, editor, "Aus dem Züricher Bekenntnis von 1545," Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903), p. 155, 12-17.

¹²⁹"In gemelten büchern dess Nüwen testaments, irrt uns kein herter knotten, habends ouch nit dafür, dass ützid ströuwis in jnen sye, oder unordig ein ins ander vermischt. Und ob sich glych der menschen geist in die offenbarung oder andere bücher nit schicken wil, achtend wir doch dess schickens nüt. Dan wir wol wüssend, dass wir menschen uns in die gschrift richten söllend, und die gschrift sich nit in uns," ibid., ll. 19-25.

¹³⁰"Und diewyl sy Gottes wort ist, hat sy für sich selbs und in jren selbs, autoritet, ansähens, gloubens, veste, warheit, achtung und vollkommenheit gnug, also dass sy nit erst muss vonn der kirchen oder den menschen, authentica oder gloubwirdig gemacht, oder von und durch menschen sätzungen ersetzt und vervollkommet werden," ibid., ll. 4-9.

canon.¹³¹ The list of books excluded the Old Testament apocrypha, but contained no critical comments about the New Testament antilegomena. Hebrews was listed after the Pauline epistles and without a designation of authorship. The confession's criteria of canonicity were also enunciated:

We know these books to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books upon which, however useful, we can not found any articles of faith.¹³²

Although the French confession does not eliminate the testimony of the church, it clearly subordinates it to the inner testimony of the Spirit as a criterion of canonicity.

The Confessio Belgica of 1561, patterned after the French confession in many ways, also contained a list of canonical Scriptures, or books "against which nothing can be alleged."¹³³ The list agrees with that of the French confession, except that Hebrews is listed as one of the fourteen Pauline epistles. The confession receives these books as holy and canonical

for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing, without any doubt, all things contained in them, not

¹³¹ Arthur C. Cochrane, editor, "The French Confession of Faith, 1559," Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 144-145, Articles III and IV. See pp. 137-140 for the historical background of this document.

¹³² Ibid., p. 145; Müller, p. 222, 26-30: "Nous cognoissons ces livres estre canoniques et reigle trescertaine de nostre foy: non tant par le commun accord et consentement de l'eglise, que par le tesmoignage et interieure persuasion du saint esprit, qui les nous faict discerner d'avec les autres livres Ecclesiastiques. Sur lesquelz (encore qu'ilz soyent utiles) on ne peut fonder aucun article de foy."

¹³³ Cochrane, p. 190, Article IV; Müller, p. 233, 32-33: "quibus nihil opponi potest."

so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Spirit witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves.¹³⁴

Here the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is again central, but it is associated with the certainty of biblical truth and authority, rather than with canonicity as such. The Belgian confession next distinguishes the "sacred books" from the apocryphal writings, which it lists as III and IV Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the appendix to Esther, the Song of the Three Children, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the two books of the Maccabees. This list includes three books not included by Trent: III and IV Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. The confession adds that such books may be used for reading and instruction insofar "as they agree with the canonical books," but their testimony may not be used to "confirm any point of faith" nor to "detract from the authority of the other sacred books." No reason is cited for their inferior status except their lack of sufficient "power and efficacy" to be used for dogmatic purposes.¹³⁵

The Second Helvetic Confession, written by Henry Bullinger in 1561,

¹³⁴ Cochrane, p. 191, Article V; Müller, p. 234, 15-22: "Hosce omnes libros solos pro sacris et canonicis recipimus, ut ad eos, veluti ad regulam, fides nostra exigatur, iisque, tanquam fundamento, innitatur, et stabiliatur. Eaque omnia, quae illis continentur, absque omni dubitatione credimus: idque non tam quod Ecclesia eos pro huiusmodi recipiat et approbat, quam inprimis, quod Spiritus S. in cordibus nostris testetur, a Deos profectos esse, probationemque eius in se ipsis habeant."

¹³⁵ Cochrane, p. 191, Article VI; Müller, p. 234, 24-33: "quos quidem Ecclesia legere et ex iis documenta de rebus cum libris Canonicis consentientibus, desumere potest. At nequaquam ea ipsorum vis et auctoritas est, ut ex nullo testimonio ipsorum aliquod dogma de fide aut Religione Christiana, certo constitui possit: tantum abest, ut divinorum illorum librorum auctoritatem imminuere valeant."

but not published until 1566, does not contain a list of the canonical Scriptures, but does make reference to the inferior status of the Old Testament Apocrypha. The confession states:

And yet we do not conceal the fact that certain books of the Old Testament were by the ancient authors called "Apocryphal," and by others "Ecclesiastical", inasmuch as some would have them read in the churches, but not advanced as an authority from which the faith is to be established.¹³⁶

Augustine is cited as approving the principle that "those books which we have suffice unto godliness" and that others "are not in the canon."¹³⁷

The Thirty Nine Articles adopted by the Anglican Church in 1563 contained a list of canonical scriptures, as well as statements on the criteria of canonicity. Preceding the catalog of books in the sixth article is a general statement which defines the listed canonical books as those "of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church."¹³⁸

The books in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament are then listed, followed by a statement describing the apocryphal books as those which the church reads for examples of life and the formation of morals, but not for the confirmation of dogmas. Such books are III and IV Esdras, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, and the Maccabean books.¹³⁹ The

¹³⁶Cochrane, p. 226; Müller, p. 171, 42-45: "Interim nihil dissimulamus quosdam Vet. Test. libros a veteribus nuncupatos esse Apocryphos, ab aliis Ecclesiasticos, utpote quos in ecclesiis legi voluerunt quidem, non tamen proferri ad auctoritatem ex his fidei confirmandam."

¹³⁷Ibid.; Müller, p. 171, 47-48: "hos non esse in Canone, ac sufficere ad pietatem eos libros quos habemus."

¹³⁸Philip Schaff, editor, Creeeds of Christendom (Third edition; New York: Harper and Bros., 1877), III, 490; Müller, p. 507, 6-8: "de quorum auctoritate in Ecclesia nunquam dubitatum est."

¹³⁹In the official revision of 1571, the following books were added to this list: the rest of the book of Esther, Baruch the Prophet, The Song of the Three Children, The Story of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and the Prayer of Manasses; Schaff, p. 491.

article continues with a statement about the New Testament canon: "All the Books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account them Canonical."¹⁴⁰ The intention of the article is evident in its sequence, if not in its explicit statements, namely, to follow the canonical practice of current editions of the English Bible.¹⁴¹ The Hebrew canon of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven book New Testament were to enjoy full canonical status, while the Old Testament apocryphal writings, printed as a separate section between the Testaments, were to be accorded an inferior status.

However, the article as it stands presents contradictory criteria. The introductory statement limits canonicity to those books which have never been questioned, and this criterion is followed in the Old Testament. New Testament books are accepted, however, as "they are commonly received." This phrase evidently expressed the common conviction of the 1562 confessors that all New Testament books are fully canonical. But it overlooks the many doubts about the New Testament antilegomena expressed not only in the early church, but in the sixteenth century as well. Moreover it appears to oppose the general principle enunciated at the beginning of the article. On the other hand, both statements, however contradictory in theory, express the same broad criterion of canonicity, namely,

¹⁴⁰Schaff, p. 491; Müller, p. 507, 28-30: "Novi Testamenti Libros omnes (ut vulgo recepti sunt) recipimus et habemus pro Canonicis."

¹⁴¹For a brief account of the canon in sixteenth century English Bible editions prior to the Council of Trent, see *supra*, pp. 130-131 and 144-146. Several editions of the Great Bible were published between 1545 and 1560, and in 1560 the first edition of the popular Geneva Bible separated the apocryphal books from the remainder of the Old Testament, and introduced them with a special preface. No doubts were expressed with regard to the New Testament antilegomena, however. See Darlow and Moule, I 1, 61-72, no. 77.

the acceptance of Biblical books by the church. Nowhere is an appeal made to the internal testimony of the Spirit or other criteria. The ambiguity of the sixth article is compounded by the thirty-fifth article, which sanctions the reading of books of homilies containing statements that ascribe full authority to the apocryphal books of the Old Testament.¹⁴²

The evidence of the Reformed confessions and theologians in the decades following the Council of Trent reveals general agreement on the extent of the canon. The canonical Old Testament was limited to the books in the Hebrew canon, while the Septuagint additions were regarded as apocryphal writings that were useful to read, but did not possess full authority. Some questions were still raised with regard to the authorship of the New Testament antilegomena, but their full canonicity was generally affirmed. In the Protestant churches of France, England, and the Low Countries, an official catalog of biblical books was adopted in the major confessions of faith, but without giving this list dogmatic status. A limited role of the church in determining canonicity was acknowledged, but with the explicit understanding that the judgment of the church did not authenticate Scripture. Particularly emphasized was the conviction that ultimately the divine status of a book cannot be based on anything but the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Lutheranism

In early Lutheranism, the reason for questioning the canonicity of

¹⁴²See the several statements from the homilies listed by Henry H. Howorth, "The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon in the Anglican Church," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, VIII (1906), 24-26. Howorth reaches the remarkable conclusion that the thirty-fifth article "must be accepted as embodying the Church's teaching on the subject, and not the sixth quite contradictory and unintelligible Article."

certain biblical books was their doubtful status in the early church. Where the judgment of early history appeared to be conclusively negative, as it did with regard to the Old Testament apocrypha, such books were regarded as useful and good to read, but denied full canonical status. Where the evidence was divided, Luther attempted to decide the question of apostolicity and consequent canonicity by comparing the dogmatic content of the questioned books with that of the known apostolic writings. His verdict was negative toward Hebrews, James, Jude, and the Apocalypse, but positive toward II and III John and II Peter. Although many of his followers shared his judgments, his position did not become an article of faith. In the decades following his death and the Tridentine decree on the canon in 1546, Luther's successors rarely followed his methodology of canonical criticism, preferring to base their criticism of the New Testament antilegomena almost exclusively on the negative verdict of early ecclesiastical tradition. But unlike their Roman Catholic and Reformed contemporaries, later Lutherans failed to set forth their opinions on the canon as a confessional position.

One of the earliest and most significant post-Tridentine Lutheran treatments of the canon came in the Confessio Wirtembergica, prepared by John Brenz and ten other theologians in 1551, presented to the Council of Trent, and published in 1552. Its purpose was to present the theological position of the land of Württemberg over against the early decisions of Trent.¹⁴³ The first sentence of its twenty-seventh article "On Holy

¹⁴³For a treatment of the background and origin of this document, see Ernst Bizer, Confessio Wirtembergica, Das württembergische Bekenntnis von 1551 (Stuttgart: Im Quell-Verlag der Evang. Gesellschaft, 1952), pp. 9-134. Bizer also gives a critical German text of the confession, pp. 135-189.

For the Latin text of the confession, see Operum Reverendi et Clarissimi Theologi, D. Ioannis Brentii (Tubingae: Excudebat Georgius Gruppenbachius, 1590), VIII, 1-34.

Scripture" deals with the canon:

We call those canonical books of the Old and New Testament Holy Scripture, whose authority has never been doubted in the church.¹⁴⁴

The remainder of the article emphasizes the primary authority of Scripture and the right of private interpretation. Patristic and biblical testimonies are added to confirm these points, but no additional discussion or argumentation is provided for the position on the canon.

The brevity of the article discourages a lengthy exposition. However, its intention was quite clearly to exclude from the biblical canon, not only the Old Testament apocrypha, but the seven antilegomena of the New Testament as well. The question of the extent of the canon was too much discussed in the mid-sixteenth century for these words to bear any other meaning. As a Lutheran statement, the confession's criterion for this exclusion is especially striking, for the only basis cited is the degree of acceptance in the history of the church. This emphasis on the church's role in the process of canonization is also suggested in article twenty-nine, where it is acknowledged that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church "has the right of testifying concerning Holy Scripture."¹⁴⁵ Article twenty-nine carefully explains that this right of the church does not give it superiority over the Word, "but that the church, as the bride of Christ,

¹⁴⁴"Die heilige Schrift nennen wir die ordenlichen, bestätigten Bücher des alten und Neuen Testaments, an deren Glaubwürdigkeit in der Kirchen nie kein Zweifel gewesen ist," Bizer, p. 178; "Sacram scripturam vocamus eos canonicos libros Veteris et Novi Testamenti, de quorum autoritate in ecclesia numquam dubitatum est," *Operum*, Brentii, VIII, 27.

This statement is the evident basis for the similar declaration in Article six of the Thirty-Nine Articles, *supra*, pp. 247-249. On the relationship between the Württemberg Confession and the Thirty-Nine Articles, see Bizer, pp. 117-126 and 197-199.

¹⁴⁵"Quod haec Ecclesia habeat ius testificandi de sacra Scriptura," *Operum*, Brentii, VIII, 29.

recognizes the voice of her spouse."¹⁴⁶

In his 1552 Assertio against the confession, Roman Catholic theologian Petrus a Soto objected to the exclusion of certain books from the Württemberg canon. He asks: "Why not [accept] also those books which were once doubted, but afterwards were received in the councils of the Fathers who diligently examined them?"¹⁴⁷ John Brenz answered the Assertio of a Soto in his 1555 Apologia, in which he justifies the position of the Württemberg confession on the canon by citing several ancient fathers, especially Jerome and Eusebius.¹⁴⁸ He makes it clear that the confession intended to exclude the seven New Testament antilegomena because of their doubtful status in the early church. Brenz writes:

Therefore in our discussion of the authority of Holy Scripture, let us deal first of all with the apocryphal books which are contained in the Vulgate edition of the Bible and which the papists thrust upon us as truly canonical books, so that when we talk about Holy Scripture we will know that that name includes no other books except those which have certain and firm testimonies of their authority.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶"non sic intelligendum est, quod Ecclesia habeat liberam potestatem quidvis statuendi, ac etiam, si libeat, mutandi scripturam, et fingendi novam doctrinam, ac instituendi novos cultus Dei, sed quod Ecclesia, ut sponsa Christi, agnoscat vocem sponsi sui, et acceperit a sponso suo certam regulam," ibid., p. 30.

¹⁴⁷"Assertio Catholicae Fidei circa Articulos Confessionis, nomine Illustrissimi Ducis Wirtenbergensis Oblatae per Legatos eius Concilio Tridentino," ibid., p. 129.

A Soto continued: "Vultis igitur nullum unquam dubium finiri in Ecclesia, sed quidquid demum aliquando dubium fuerit, semper futurum dubium? . . . Quis praeferat tot conciliorum, et Patrum auctoritati, et tanto consensui Ecclesiae, non modernae tantum, sed antiquae, sensum suum?"

¹⁴⁸"Apologia Confessionis Illustrissimi Principis, ac Domini, D. Christophori, Ducis Wirtenbergensis," ibid., 237-83-. Brenz's lengthy prolegomena to the Apologia is found in the same volume, pp. 169-236.

¹⁴⁹"Dicturi ergo iterum de auctoritate sacrae scripturae percurremus primum omnium apocryphos libros, qui habentur in vulgata bibliorum editione et quos pontificii obtrudunt nobis pro vere canonicis libris, ut, cum nobis sermo est de sacra scriptura, sciamus nos hoc nomine non comprehendere alios

Brenz then discusses the apocryphal books individually, including in that discussion not only the Old Testament apocrypha, but the seven antilegomena of the New Testament. He summarizes his patristic citations thus:

"You have the opinion of the ancients about the apocryphal books, which several call dreams or fables, while others judge them to be useful for the edification of the church, but not for proving dogmas."¹⁵⁰ His own

opinion on the apocrypha of both testaments is the latter: such books are not to be rejected, but they cannot lay the foundation of faith.¹⁵¹

For God wanted his true church to have "a most certain rule" for judging all things.¹⁵² Nowhere does Brenz indicate that he is employing criteria

similar to Luther's. On the contrary, his criterion is strictly historical: only those books are canonical which have the firm and certain testimony of history to their authority. With Brenz and the Confession Wirtembergica, the historical criterion of canonicity had received its most drastic Lutheran application to date.

Matthias Flacius, ardent champion of pure Lutheranism and fiery adversary of the Leipzig Interim, was responsible for two significant literary

praeter eos libros, qui habent certa et firma suae auctoritatis testimonia," ibid., p. 729.

¹⁵⁰"Habes veterum sententiam de libris Apocryphis, quorum nonnulli vocantur somnia, nonnulli fabulae, et alii utiles quidem censeantur ad ecclesiae aedificationem, non autem ad dogmatum probationem," ibid., p. 731.

¹⁵¹"Non igitur iudicamus hos libros prorsum abiiciendos," ibid. See also pp. 199-200: "nec nunquam habuerunt, nisi in Asotica Ecclesia, quam pro vera Ecclesia non agnoscimus, probandorum dogmatum auctoritatem."

¹⁵²"Voluit igitur Spiritus sanctus sacram Scripturam, initio quidem per Mosen, deinde per Prophetas et Apostolos literis mandatum, extare, ut vera Ecclesia Domini haberet certissimam regulam, ad quam omnia Philosophica, Cabalistica et Asotica deliria exigeret," ibid., p. 202.

works which deal briefly with the biblical canon, the so-called Magdeburg Centuries and the Clavis Scripturae. The Centuries, which deal with the past history of the church in a remarkable attempt to establish the catholicity of Lutheranism, were produced by Flacius with the assistance of Wigand, Iudex, and Faber and published in Basel between 1562 and 1569.¹⁵³ The canonicity of the Old Testament is discussed briefly as the last point in a long section dealing with the Old Testament contents. The Centuries state:

Finally, although the number of authentic books of the Old Testament is not precisely expressed by the apostles, it can nevertheless be fairly well conjectured from their citations, for they held those books to be certain and approved which Jewish antiquity never questioned.¹⁵⁴

After indicating such citations in the New Testament, the Centuries cite the statement from Josephus' Against Apion approving the twenty-two book canon and describing the Jewish reverence for these Scriptures.¹⁵⁵

In the New Testament, the Centuries explain that the various books which have claimed a place in the canon were written in the first century and distributed to the churches "in the name of the Apostles or their disciples." Some of these books were unquestioned from the very beginning,

¹⁵³Ecclesiastica historia, integram ecclesiae Christi ideam, . . . secundam singulas centurias, perspicuo ordine complectens: singulari diligentia et fide ex vetustissimis et optimis historicis, patribus, et aliis scriptoribus congesta: per aliquot studiosos et pios viros in urbe Mageburgica, XII volumini in VI tomi (Basileae: Per Ioannem Oporinum, 1562-1569). The canon is treated in Tomus I, centuria I, liber 2, caput iv.

¹⁵⁴"Postremo, etsi numerus librorum authenticorum veteris Testamenti, ab Apostolis ex professo nominatim non est expressus; tamen haud obscure ex citationibus coniectari potest, quod eos pro certis et probatis habuerint, de quibus antiquitas Iudaica nunquam dubitavit," ibid., p. 52.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.; for the citation from Josephus as quoted by Eusebius, see supra, pp. 16-17.

and from them "the foundations of the articles of faith can be safely derived [fundamenta de articulis fidei tuto peti possunt]." Other writings were questioned and on that account not included in the earliest canon, but later they were generally "received in the number of catholic Scriptures"; this group contains the seven antilegomena. Still other early writings were rejected as apocryphal.¹⁵⁶ After this general classification, the Centuries briefly discuss the individual antilegomena. The doubts expressed by Eusebius on the status of James seem well-founded, for James deviates from the rule of apostolic doctrine and speaks too little about the work of Christ. Since the author does not call himself an apostle, he was probably a disciple of the apostles who lived at the end of the first century or later.¹⁵⁷

Luther's criticisms are also reflected in the comments on Jude. The author is not an apostle, for he calls himself a slave, quotes from an apocryphal book, and writes Greek instead of Persian (as Jude would have, if the tradition is correct).¹⁵⁸ II Peter, on the other hand, appears to have prophetic powers. Moreover, he expressly states that he was with Christ on the mount of transfiguration, and only apostles were present.¹⁵⁹ II and III John have a style and content very similar to that of I John. Since I John enjoys the unanimous approval of antiquity, it is probable

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁵⁷"Nam epistola Iacobi ab analogiam doctrinae Apostolicae haud mediocriter aberrat. . . .eam epistolam a quodam discipulo Apostolorum sub finem huius seculi, aut inferiore tempore, scriptam esse," ibid.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹"Nam stylus et compositio a priori non admodum discrepit," ibid., pp. 54-55.

that the other two letters were also written by the Apostle John.¹⁶⁰ The Epistle to the Hebrews is probably not Pauline, and its questionable doctrinal content supports the legitimacy of the early doubts.¹⁶¹ The Apocalypse was not questioned until the third century, and then the reasons were inadequate. When its contents are compared with the "analogy of faith," the verdict is favorable, for it speaks correctly of justification, repentance, the resurrection, eternal life, and the church. Its style, while often unclear, is nevertheless similar to Ezekiel, which is clearly canonical.¹⁶² The Centuries thus display a generally favorable attitude toward the canonicity of II Peter, II and III John, and the Apocalypse, while their attitude toward James, Jude, and Hebrews is essentially negative.

The criteria employed in these judgments are explicitly indicated in a paragraph explaining why certain other writings are classed as apocrypha and excluded from the canon. The Centuries state:

These arguments prove them not to be canonical: they lack the testimony of all ecclesiastical writers, the character of their language is different from the manner of the apostles, they depart from the analogy of faith and the truth of its doctrine, and they clearly betray their authors to be heretics.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰"Verum stylus non admodum a priori discrepat. . . .videtur innuere, dubitatum esse utri Ioanni eas epistolas tribuerent," ibid., p. 55.

¹⁶¹"His et similibus rationibus mota prudens vetustas, quae omnia ad analogiam fidei examinare solita est, de epistola ad Ebraeos iure dubitasse videtur," ibid.

¹⁶²"Praeterea si ad analogiam fidei eam examinarunt, non potuerunt aliquid invenire doctrinae Apostolicae contrarium," ibid., pp. 55-57.

¹⁶³"Probat autem non esse eorum, his argumentis: quod destituantur testimonio omnium Ecclesiasticorum scriptorum, et quod character phraseos a consuetudine Apostolorum variet, et quod ab analogia fidei, et veritate suae doctrinae discrepent, et autores suos haereticos non obscure prodant," ibid., p. 57.

The criteria are historical, stylistic, and doctrinal. Compared with Luther, the Centuries are more keenly aware of historical judgments on these books. The influence of Erasmus is also evident, but Eusebius is cited more frequently than Jerome for the testimony of the early church. The stylistic arguments appear to be those advanced earlier by Erasmus and Luther. The doctrinal criticism resembles Luther's, for the Centuries employ the "analogy of faith" similarly to Luther's "was Christum treibet." In spite of the greater emphasis on non-doctrinal criteria, the Centuries deviate from Luther's judgment on only one book, the Apocalypse. Yet even there, the decisive factor in its acceptance is dogmatic, and it is Luther's criterion: the Apocalypse sets forth the doctrine of justification and related articles correctly. In short, while the Centuries give greater attention to historical and stylistic criteria than did Luther, their affinity to Luther is evident in their determination of apostolicity and consequent canonicity by means of dogmatic content.

Flacius' Clavis Scripturae, finished in exile in 1567, treats the question of the canon only briefly. In discussing various methods of studying Scripture, Flacius describes different ways of dividing and distinguishing the biblical books. One important distinction recognizes three classes of biblical books: canonical, doubtful, and apocryphal. The canonical books are those "which are plainly accepted and approved, and always placed in the biblical canon [qui plane accepti probatique sunt, et in canone biblico semper censiti]." The second category includes those books "which have been doubted [de quibus est dubitatum]," namely, the seven New Testament antilegomena. Concerning the third class, Flacius

writes:

The apocryphal (that is, hidden or set aside) books, to which no special authority is assigned, are the following: Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus or Sirach, Judith, Tobit, History of Bel and Susannah, Two Maccabees, III and IV Esdras, Baruch, and the Song of the Three Children. These books may now be added to the biblical canon, but they have no authority among intelligent writers.¹⁶⁴

The basis of Flacius' classification is the amount of acceptance enjoyed by the various books in the ancient church. The dogmatic criteria employed in the earlier Centuries are no longer adduced, and all seven antilegomena are placed in the doubtful category. In that category, however, their status was still higher than that of the Old Testament apocrypha.

One of the most thorough treatments of the criteria of canonicity in sixteenth century Lutheranism was that of Martin Chemnitz in his Examen of the Council of Trent which appeared between 1565 and 1573. In his critique of the decrees of the fourth session of Trent, Chemnitz devotes an entire section to the canon of Holy Scripture. In this section Chemnitz discusses three basic questions: Why is the Scripture called canonical?

¹⁶⁴"Apocryphi, id est, quasi absconditi aut sepositi, quibus nulla eximia autoritas tribuitur, sunt: Sapientia Salomonis, Ecclesiasticus aut Syrach, Judith, Tobias, Historia Beli et Susannae, duo Machabeorum, duo posteriores Esdrae, Baruch, ac Canticum trium Puerorum. Hi libri licet Biblico canoni nunc addantur; tamen nullius auctoritatis apud intelligentes scriptores habentur," Clavis Scripturae Sacrae, seu De Sermone Sacrarum Literarum (Editio nova; Jena: Johannis Ludovici, 1674), altera pars, p. 60.

Like others of this period, Flacius valued the New Testament citation of the Old Testament as a means for determining Old Testament canonicity. In a short polemical tract against Trent, Flacius states, p. 731: "Quo facto anathematizant omnem primitivam ecclesiam, quae de istis scriptis dubitavit: imo et ipsum Christum et Apostolos, qui illa veteris Testamenti scripti nunquam, sua citatione, aut qualicunque nominatione, confirmare voluerunt, cum essent multa, quae praeclare citari inde, pro regno Christi, potuissent; si modo authentica fuissent."

How does Scripture acquire its canonical authority? Which books are canonical and which are apocryphal?¹⁶⁵

"Canon," says Chemnitz, is a biblical term having the sense of "rule of faith," and denoting the necessary norm for the building of the house of God. This rule or canon is the divine doctrine revealed through Christ and the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and now contained in Scripture as God's way of guarding his church from error. The Scripture is therefore called a canon, and its books are known as canonical, because it contains the deposit of this divine teaching.¹⁶⁶

Scripture does not derive its authority from the church, but principally from the fact that it is divinely inspired.¹⁶⁷ The content of Scripture was of such vital importance that God selected certain men to write and furnished them with many divine testimonies of their inspiration.¹⁶⁸ These writings were then given to the church so that she might preserve and transmit them uncorrupted to posterity.¹⁶⁹ The primitive church, like

¹⁶⁵Martin Chemnitz, Examinis Concilii Tridentini quatuor partes, in quibus praecipuorum capitum totus doctrinae papisticae, firma et solida refutatio, tum ex Sacrae Scripturae fontibus, tum ex orthodoxorum patrum consensu, collecta est; uno volumine complectens (Francofurti ad Moenum: Ioannis Bringeri, 1578), p. 49.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 49-52. Chemnitz notes on p. 49 that Scripture is not called canonical "quod illa autoritas per Canonem alicuius Concilii ipsa attributa sit."

¹⁶⁷"Falsum est et hoc, sacram Scripturam nec ex se, nec ex suis autoribus habere auctoritatem Canonicam, sed eam aliunde ex Ecclesiae auctoritate scilicet mutuatum esse. . . principaliter inde, quod divinitus est inspirata," ibid., p. 52.

¹⁶⁸"Deus certos quosdam homines ad scribendum elegit, et illos multis miraculis et divinis testimoniis ornavit, ut nullum esset dubium divinitus inspirata esse ea, quae scribebant," ibid.

¹⁶⁹"proposita, tradita, et commendata sunt Ecclesiae, ut ea, adhibita summa cura et providentia, incorrupta conservaret, et quasi per manus traderet, et commendaret posteritati," ibid.

the Old Testament church, could give sure testimony as to which writings were divinely inspired because she knew the authors whom God had commended to the church. More importantly, she could determine which writings were authentically apostolic by comparing them with the oral proclamation of the apostles.¹⁷⁰ Chemnitz thus maintains a threefold basis for biblical authority:

Scripture therefore has canonical authority principally from the Holy Spirit, by whose impulse and inspiration it was produced. Then from the writers, for whom God himself produced certain and peculiar testimonies of the truth. Thereafter, it has authority from the primitive church, as from a witness at the time when those writings were written and approved.¹⁷¹

The testimony of the primitive church was preserved in ancient historical records and handed down to posterity, so that the church of subsequent times has become the custodian of the testimony of the primitive church concerning the Scriptures.¹⁷² Chemnitz thus distinguishes carefully between three levels of tradition on the canon: the testimony of the apostolic church, the testimony of the church in the first centuries which received and preserved the witness of the apostolic church, and the testimony of the present church. Because the assertions of the present

¹⁷⁰"noverat enim autores, quos Deus peculiaribus testimoniis Ecclesiae commendarat, noverat etiam, quae essent illa, quae ab ipsis scripta erant, et ex iis, quae traditione vivae vocis ab Apostolis acciperat, poterat iudicare, illa quae scripta erant, esse illam ipsam doctrinam, quam Apostoli viva voce tradebant," *ibid.*

¹⁷¹"Habet igitur Scriptura canonicam auctoritatem, principaliter a Spiritu sancto, cuius impulsu et inspiratione prodita est. Deinde a Scriptoribus, quibus Deus ipse certa et peculiaria veritatis testimonia perhibuit. Postea a primitiva Ecclesia habet auctoritatem, ut a teste, cuius tempore scripta illa edita et approbata fuerunt," *ibid.*

¹⁷²"Postea perpetua successione per manus tradita est posteritati, et in certis antiquitatis historiis diligenter conservata, ita ut sequens Ecclesia, custos esset testificationis primitivae Ecclesiae de Scripturis," *ibid.*

church are dependent upon the testimony of the apostolic church preserved by the subsequent church, she must speak as a witness proving her assertions when she testifies to canonicity.¹⁷³ In applying this principle, Chemnitz notes that the Old Testament canon can be largely determined by observing which books are cited in the New Testament as authentic.¹⁷⁴ Within the New Testament, it is evident that John approved the synoptic Gospels and that Peter approved the Pauline epistles and commended them to the churches. John also claims the approval of the apostolic church for his own writings.¹⁷⁵ Chemnitz asserts: "In the New Testament, apostolic authority is required for approving any writing as canonical or divinely inspired."¹⁷⁶

When the early post-apostolic church was presented with other writings claiming to be apostolic, she rejected such books for two reasons. First, it could not be demonstrated from the testimony of the apostolic church that such writings "were either written by the apostles, or approved by living apostles and passed on and commended by the primitive church."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³"Non autem habet potestatem statuendi aut decernendi aliquid de libris sacris, cuius non possit certa documenta ex testificatione primitivae Ecclesiae proferre," *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴"Ita ex allegationibus, quae extant in Novo Testamento colligi potest, quis fuerit Canon scripturae Veteris Testamenti," *ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁷⁵The use of the New Testament to authenticate the Old Testament is not a departure from Chemnitz's principles, for the New Testament is the deposit of the testimony of the apostolic church. Chemnitz' use of an "apocryphal" writing, II Peter, to authenticate the Pauline epistles shows that Chemnitz still thought of II Peter as presenting genuine apostolic testimony.

¹⁷⁶"Apostolica auctoritas requiritur, ut in Novo Testamento probetur scriptum aliquod esse Canonicum, seu divinitus inspiratum," *ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁷⁷"quod vel ab Apostolis essent conscripta, vel viventibus Apostolis comprobata, et prima Ecclesia tradita et commendata," *ibid.*

Second, such writings proposed doctrines different from those received from the apostles and still confessed. On these grounds, the early church totally rejected some writings, while other writings with a deficient testimony of apostolic authorship or approval were clearly distinguished from the more certain books.¹⁷⁸

A crucial question, Chemnitz contends, is whether the present church can give the earlier disputed writings a status equal to the undisputed books. Trent has attempted to do this, but without producing the necessary historical witnesses from antiquity. With this action, Rome implied that she could make Aesop's fables canonical if she so desired.¹⁷⁹ Chemnitz argues: "The church does not have such power that it can make false writings true and true writings false, or that it can make doubtful and uncertain writings certain, canonical, and legitimate, without any certain and solid documents such as are required for this matter."¹⁸⁰

Chemnitz then turns to his third question: which books are canonical

¹⁷⁸"quia afferebant peregrinam doctrinam, non consentaneam illi, quam Ecclesia ab Apostolis acceptant, in recenti tunc adhuc memoria conservabat. . . .non simpliciter damnavit, sed tamen distinguere et sejungere voluit ab illis, quae sine ulla dubitatione et contradictione vera et legitima erant scripta," *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹Chemnitz quickly adds that his reference to Aesop's fables is not meant to disparage the questioned books, for he gives those books the same "honorificum locum quem in veteri Ecclesia semper habuerunt." But he insists that if Rome wishes those books to be canonical she must be able "proferri certissima documenta primitivae et antiquissimae Ecclesiae," *ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁸⁰"Ecclesiam non habere illam potestatem, quod possit ex falsis scriptis facere vera, ex veris falsa, ex dubiis et incertis facere certa, canonica et legitima, sine ullis certis et firmis documentis, quae ad hanc rem requiri," *ibid.* Chemnitz adds that Augustine never held that the church had the power "scriptis quibusdam tribuere canonicam auctoritatem, quam nec ex se ipsis, nec ex suis autoribus habuerunt, et quam illis cum scriberentur temporibus, non habuerint, sicut Pontificii contendunt."

and which are not? In the Old Testament, Chemnitz recognizes only the books in the Hebrew canon as canonical, basing his judgment largely on the "most certain and most manifest" testimony of the early church recorded by Eusebius and Jerome.¹⁸¹ The apocryphal books are not canonical because they lack sufficient attestation. The reasons for this are obvious, he maintains. Some were written after the time of the prophets by men who lacked divine evidence for the certitude and authority of their doctrine. Some indeed bear the names of prophets, but proof is lacking that they were actually written by the men whose names they bear.¹⁸² Whoever wishes to make such books canonical must have certain proof that they were written by prophets, and such proof is impossible.¹⁸³ In the New Testament, the fathers indicate three reasons for assigning a doubtful status to seven books. First, the ancient church did not have certain evidence that these books were written or approved by the apostles and commended to the church.¹⁸⁴ Second, on the basis of the best available evidence it was not certain that they were written by those whose names they bear.¹⁸⁵ Third, since

¹⁸¹Chemnitz' list of Old Testament apocrypha comprises Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit, III and IV Esdras, Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, I and II Maccabees, and additions to Esther and Daniel. It is to be noted that Chemnitz' list, like that of Flacius, differed slightly from the contents of Luther's Bible as well as the Tridentine list, neither of which included III and IV Esdras. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁸²"sed non habuerunt certas testificationes, quod ab illis quibus tribuuntur, essent conscripti," *ibid.*

¹⁸³"quod certo, absque omni dubitatione sint a Prophetis conscripti: quod probare impossibile est," *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴"Quia apud veteres non inventa fuerunt satis certa, firma, et consentientia testimonia de testificatione primae Apostolicae Ecclesiae, quod libri illi essent ab Apostolis comprobati, et Ecclesiae commendati," *ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁵"quia non certo ex testificatione primae et veteris ecclesiae

the evidence for the apostolic origin or approval of these books was not unanimous the matter remained unsettled.¹⁸⁶ Yet Trent has anathematized Eusebius, Jerome, Origen, Melitus and the whole ancient church, on whose testimony we all rely.¹⁸⁷

The basic question is this, concludes Chemnitz: Is it certain that the questioned books of both Testaments are divinely inspired Scripture, that is, that they were either written or approved by the prophets and apostles who alone had the divine mandate? He answers: the whole of antiquity responds that it is not certain.¹⁸⁸ This does not mean that such books are to be condemned, for they are very useful. But the purpose of this whole discussion, Chemnitz asserts, is "that the rule of faith or of sound doctrine in the church may be certain."¹⁸⁹ The authoritative proof of ecclesiastical doctrine may be drawn only from the canonical books, as the fathers testify, and only such books can settle doctrinal disputes. The disputed books may be read in the churches for the edification of the people, but they may not be used as the sole proof for doctrinal questions. Moreover, whatever is said in the disputed books must be interpreted and understood according to the analogy of those truths plainly taught in the

constitit, an ab illis, sub quorum nomine editi sunt, libri illi conscripti essent, sed iudicat fuerunt ab aliis sub nomine apostolorum editi," ibid.

¹⁸⁶"cum quidam ex vetustissimis aliquos ex illis libris tribuerunt apostolis, quidam vero contradicerent, res illa, sicut non erat indubitata certa, relicta fuit in dubio," ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸"Licet probari non posset, libros illos vel a Prophetis, vel ab Apostolis sive scriptos, sive comprobatos, et a prima veterique Ecclesia certo et constater receptos," ibid.

¹⁸⁹"Ut regula fidei, sive sanae in Ecclesia doctrinae certa sit," ibid., p. 57.

canonical books.¹⁹⁰

With several citations from the fathers and strictures against Trent, Chemnitz brings his discussion to a close. He based his verdict of canonicity entirely upon the judgment of primitive tradition. He demanded, in effect, that history provide him with an incontestable canon whose authority was derived from its divine inspiration. His accent had shifted from Luther's analysis of soteriological content to an emphasis on both inspiration and history. His emphasis on historical investigation reflected not only the historical consciousness that had begun to dawn in humanism, but also the growing awareness of Lutheranism that the proper use of ecclesiastical tradition was a theological necessity. It was his emphasis on divine inspiration that many of his followers were to stress, however, and with this emphasis his own distinction between certain and dubious books was soon to be forgotten.¹⁹¹

Martin Chemnitz was also one of the framers of the only official Lutheran confession adopted after the death of Luther, the Formula of Concord. Designed to end intra-Lutheran controversies that developed after the Leipzig Interim of 1549, the Formula was adopted in 1577. Like the earlier Lutheran confessions, the Formula does not contain a statement

¹⁹⁰"Nullum igitur dogma ex istis libris extrui debet, quod non habet certa et manifesta fundamenta et testimonia in aliis canonicis libris. . . . sed juxta analogiam eorum quae manifestae traduntur in libris canonicis," ibid.

¹⁹¹This emphasis, which reached its climax in the late seventeenth century, was visible already in the dogmatists of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For the views of these men on the canon, see J. A. O. Preus, "The New Testament Canon in the Lutheran Dogmatists," The Springfielder, XXV (1961), 8-33, and Carl Heinz Ratschow, Lutherische Dogmatik zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, Teil I (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1964), 133-137.

on canonicity. It does, however, state:

We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged [die einige Regel und Richtschnur, nach welcher zugleich alle Lehren und Lehrer gerichtet und geurteilt werden sollen].¹⁹²

Here the Scriptures are described as the "rule and norm," terms which accurately define "canon." But the books comprised in this canon are defined only as "prophetic and apostolic." The confession further states that canonical books must be either prophetic or apostolic, but it has neither listed such books, nor defined these adjectives in such a way that the precise extent of the canon could be determined by confessional principles.

The Formula of Concord, however, suggests why the extent of the canon could not be an article of faith for Lutherans. In insisting that "only" Holy Scripture is the canon of the church's faith and life and that ecclesiastical tradition functions only as a "witness" and "exposition" of the biblical message in concrete historical situations,¹⁹³ the Formula is

¹⁹²"The Formula of Concord," The Book of Concord, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1959), Epitome, Rule and Norm, 1, p. 464. The official German text is in Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (5. durchgesehene Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 767.

¹⁹³Other writings "should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times," ibid., p. 465. Later the Formula states: "Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith [allein Zeugnis und Erklärung des Glaubens], setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood in the church of God by contemporaries with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned [wie jederzeit die Heilige Schrift in streitigen Arikuln in der Kirchen Gottes von den damals Lebenden vorstanden und ausgelegt, und derselben widerwärtige Lehr vorworfen und vordampt worden]," ibid., p. 465; Bekenntnisschriften, p. 769.

echoing Luther's earlier confessional assertion: "This means that the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel."¹⁹⁴ Thus any teaching or practice of the church not taught by Holy Scripture could not on principle become a binding article of faith or dogma, regardless of its usefulness, desirability, or general acceptance. On that account, the precise extent of the "prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments" remained a theoretically open question for sixteenth century Lutheranism.¹⁹⁵

In spite of its confessional freedom, post-Tridentine Lutheran theology presented a generally homogeneous treatment of the canon. This treatment was characterized by a more negative judgment of the New Testament antilegomena than was true of either contemporaneous Roman Catholic or Reformed theology. Without exception, Lutheran theologians of this period shared the conviction of their Reformed contemporaries that the Old Testament apocrypha were useful books, but of inferior authority. In the New Testament, the analysis of the dogmatic content of questioned books, practiced so strenuously by Luther, was still visible in the Magdeburg Centuries, but was generally discarded by Lutheran theologians in favor of historical criteria which judged all of the antilegomena to be of doubtful authority. Such doctrinal analysis was also evident in Calvin and Beza, but their judgment, like that of Reformed theology in general, was

¹⁹⁴"The Smalcald Articles," Part II, Article II, 13-15, in The Book of Concord, p. 295; Bekenntnisschriften, p. 421.

¹⁹⁵For an analysis of the understanding of Holy Scripture in the Lutheran Confessions, including a brief discussion of the canon, see the author's Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 23-80, especially pp. 28-30.

more positive. An emphasis on inspiration is noticeable in all theologies of this period, but, while it tended to remove distinctions within the category of inspired books, this emphasis was not in itself a criterion of canonicity. The discussions of the canon during these decades continued to occur primarily in a polemical setting. This setting makes it evident that late sixteenth century theology saw the canon question not only as a problem in its own right, but as a graphic illustration of divergent views on the authority of the church in her use of Holy Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition.

CHAPTER VI

RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters have added considerable new data to the history of the canon in the sixteenth century. But the significance of this study lies more in the general picture of the sixteenth century debate on the canon that has emerged than in the details of the various individual positions we have discussed. Our study supports the prevailing views that sixteenth century Protestantism regarded the Old Testament apocrypha less favorably than did Roman Catholicism and that the Roman Catholic-Protestant difference on the relative authority of the church and Scripture was a major issue in the debate. It documents such well-established facts as the humanistic use of historical methodology, Luther's appeal to the evangelical content of the biblical books, the Roman Catholic emphasis on the authoritative decisions of the church, and the Reformed accent on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Our study challenges none of these factors, but places all of them in a new light by clarifying the context in which they originated and developed.

Our conclusions thus differ from generally prevailing views in four respects: One, in locating the central question of the debate within the received canon, rather than on its perimeter, and in maintaining that this central question was left open by all three confessions; two in contending that this question had its origin in historical rather than dogmatic factors; three, in claiming that the various solutions to this question had their basis in differing understandings of the data, function, and adequacy of ecclesiastical tradition; and four, in recognizing the

areas of interconfessional agreement that emerge when the various criteriological emphases are viewed within the larger context of the debate. These four theses provide the basis and sequence for the discussion in the following pages.

First, our investigation has revealed how little disagreement existed among the three confessions on which books belonged in editions of the Bible. The central question was not whether one or more books should be included in the Bible, but whether all books within the received canon should enjoy the same degree of authority. Different answers to this central question resulted in different arrangements of the contents of both Testaments, but the contents themselves varied little. No one in the three confessional traditions endeavored to reconstruct the biblical canon anew, but continued to include in editions of the Bible the books received from tradition. The only differences with regard to the extent of the canon occurred with regard to the exclusion or inclusion of III and IV Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh, with Roman Catholicism excluding all three books, some Lutherans excluding only the former, and most Reformed theologians omitting only the latter. Yet these slight differences were never an issue in the debate. Although granting only limited authority to the Old Testament apocrypha, the humanists, reformers, and Roman Catholics like Driedo and Seripando held these books in high regard. The present Protestant practice of excluding all Old Testament apocrypha from her Bible editions contradicts not only the first fifteen centuries of ecclesiastical tradition, but the considered judgment of the sixteenth century fathers as well.

Our study has further indicated that the principle question in the debate, namely, whether all books within the received canon should enjoy

the same degree of authority, was in principle left undecided by all three confessional traditions. This is most apparent in Lutheranism, where no treatment of the canon occurs in the official confessional documents. Some Reformed confessions made intracanonical distinctions by placing the Old Testament apocrypha on a lower level, but in neither Protestant confessional tradition was the extent of the canon regarded as an article of faith. Most strikingly, our investigation reveals that the Council of Trent did not intend to eliminate intracanonical distinctions, particularly within the Old Testament. Contrary to the understanding of the Tridentine decree that has generally obtained since the late sixteenth century, the fathers of Trent clearly intended to leave this question open to posterity, although many of them personally did not favor such distinctions. The absence of such distinctions from the decree was more the result of expediency than a conscious theological decision. To be sure, the Tridentine decree regards all canonical books as divinely inspired, but it does not define the nature or implications of such inspiration. Thus the Council of Trent does not prevent contemporary Roman Catholicism from using the term "deuterocanonical" similarly to Protestantism, namely, to denote inferior, rather than merely later, canonical status.¹

Second, our investigation reveals that the central question of the

¹Contemporary Roman Catholicism generally uses the term similarly to Sixtus of Sienna. For example, L. F. Hartman, "Canon, Biblical," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), III, 29, states: "Books that were always accepted as inspired by all are known as protocanonical (belonging to the 'first' or undisputed canon); books whose canonicity was once doubted or disputed but later defined are called deuterocanonical (belonging to the 'second' or later-defined canon). For Catholics all the books of both groups are of equal value."

intracanonial authority of the Old Testament apocrypha and the New Testament antilegomena had its origin in historical rather than dogmatic factors. It has generally been recognized that the canonical criticism of humanism was historically motivated. But this same motivation has often been discounted in the canonical criticism of the reformers and the apologetic efforts of Roman Catholics. The reformers' criticism is sometimes regarded as the straightforward application of dogmatic criteria to certain books which appeared to disagree with their theology, while Roman Catholics are often thought to have ignored history in their desire to exalt the authority of the church. Neither interpretation is accurate. The reformers' canonical criticism was limited to books lacking convincing historical attestation, and the Roman Catholic defense of these books also appealed to historical evidence. Thus the major issue in the debate was neither interconfessional nor doctrinal in origin, but was based on premises supplied by the humanistic picture of antiquity.

Third, our study concludes that the various solutions to the central question of the debate had their basis in differing understandings of the data, function, and adequacy of ecclesiastical tradition on the canon. This conclusion requires a careful exposition, for it involves the proper understanding of a number of sixteenth century criteriological emphases. We shall first discuss the sixteenth century understanding of the data of tradition and briefly examine the accuracy of that understanding. We shall then note different understandings of the function of ecclesiastical tradition in determining the authority of the questioned writings. Finally, we will briefly review various solutions to the question of the adequacy of ecclesiastical tradition to determine canonicity.

The data of ecclesiastical tradition involved in the sixteenth century

discussion are too manifold and complex for a detailed review in these paragraphs. We must therefore speak in generalities and illustrate the question with a few specific examples. In general, both the critics and defenders of books within the received canon felt that their positions were in keeping with the church's tradition, and to some extent they were both correct. As our first chapter has indicated, scholarly theory and ecclesiastical practice were often in disagreement from the fifth to the sixteenth century. Theory favored, or at least permitted, the subordinate status of the Old Testament apocrypha, while practice tended to place all books in the Vulgate on the same level. Sixteenth century critics of these books rightfully claimed the support of Jerome and Rufinus, but many other fathers throughout the history of the church could also have been adduced in support of their position. The contention of some sixteenth century Roman Catholic theologians that Rome's tradition on the larger Old Testament canon was continuous and unbroken was clearly in error.² Moreover, scholarly research has done little to contradict the general picture presented by Eusebius and Jerome on the disputed status of seven New Testament books in the early church. On the other hand, the

²Roman Catholic author Appel's recent book still gives that impression of the Roman tradition. He states, for example, p. 92: "Die mittelalterliche Christenheit hat stets denselben Kanon bekannt: den Kanon der Ökumenischen Festlegung um 400." But Protestant author Sundberg similarly imputes the inferior status of the Apocrypha in contemporary Protestantism to Luther and sixteenth century Protestantism. In his comments in "Shorter Communications: A Symposium on the Canon of Scripture," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXVIII (1966), 194, Sundberg states: "As everyone knows, the books of the Apocrypha have been on the losing side of discussions about the OT canon among Protestants since Luther"; again, p. 202, "And any Protestant doctrine of canonization that takes seriously the question of Christian usage and history and spiritual heritage will lead ultimately to the Christian OT as defined in the Western Church at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries." We are here faulting Sundberg's oversimplification of history rather than his suggestion.

occasional sixteenth century Protestant claim that neither the Old Testament apocrypha nor the New Testament antilegomena had ever enjoyed full authority in the church tended to overlook the centuries of ecclesiastical practice evidenced in the church's Vulgate tradition.³ Thus the sixteenth century's frequent understanding of the data of canonical tradition as either continuously critical or uncritical needs to be corrected in favor of a view that recognizes the fluidity, uncertainty, and fluctuation within that tradition.

That contemporary Christianity cannot content itself with the sixteenth century understanding of the data of tradition may be illustrated by examining more closely the sixteenth century understanding of the Old Testament canon of the early church. Humanists, reformers, and many early Roman Catholics of that century were agreed that Jerome had correctly described the Old Testament canon of the early church. Jerome's view of a closed Hebrew canon in that period rested not only on his experiences in Palestine, but on the judgment of Melito and Origen reported by Eusebius. Moreover, Eusebius had also quoted Josephus to this effect. According to this view, the twenty-two book canon of the Old Testament was collected and sealed by Ezra, so that the Bible apparently used by Christ, the apostles and the earliest church was limited to those twenty-two books. This view of a closed Hebrew canon at the time of Ezra was generally accepted

³Similar statements are still made by Protestant authors. See, for example, R. L. Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957). Harris states, p. 192, that the Council of Trent was "unmindful of evidence of former popes and scholars, of the Fathers of the Church and the witness of Christ and the apostles." On p. 194, he writes: "The Roman Catholics adopted them [the apocrypha] only in Reformation times in reaction to Protestantism and to bolster their shaky position with respect to certain dogmas."

in the sixteenth century. It was held not only by Christian theologians, but was also expressed in 1538 by the noted Jewish scholar, Elias Levita, who explained that Ezra and the men of the Great Synagog had gathered together in one volume the books of the Hebrew canon received from Moses, the prophets, and the elders.⁴ Even several Roman Catholics who favored the larger Septuagint canon did not deny that the canon of the Jews and early Christians had been smaller than that of the later church. For many in the sixteenth century, the theory of a closed Hebrew canon at the time of Ezra made it impossible to regard the Septuagint additions as fully authoritative writings of the Old Testament.⁵

Yet this understanding of the formation of the Old Testament canon is open to serious question today. Considerable evidence exists that the so-called Hebrew canon was not closed yet in Jesus' day, and that a

⁴Elias Levita, The Massoreth Ha-Massoreth, Being an Exposition of the Massoretic Notes on the Hebrew Bible, edited and translated by Christian D. Ginsburg (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), pp. 102-143. Levita writes, p. 120: "But when they [Ezra and the 120 men of the Great Synagog] did not find the autograph itself, which seems most likely to have happened, they undoubtedly followed the majority of Codices, which they had collected from different places, one here and one there, as the twenty-four books were then not joined together in one volume. Now they (Ezra and his associates) have joined them together, and divided them into three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagio-grapha." Levita's next paragraphs discuss the proper order of books in the Hebrew canon.

The primary purpose of Levita's essay was not to establish the Hebrew canon, however, but to prove that the vowel points in the Hebrew text had been added by the Massoretes, and not by Ezra and his colleagues as many thought.

⁵Appel fails to understand that sixteenth century Protestants as well as many early Roman Catholics accepted what they thought was the pre-Jamnia Hebrew canon fixed at the time of Ezra and employed by Christ, the apostles, and the primitive church. He writes, pp. 349-350: "In keiner Weise achtete sich die christliche Kirche an die Auffassungen des nachchristlichen Judentums gebunden. . . . Die Reformation hingegen berief sich auf den damaligen hebräischen Kanon, so wie dieser in der Tradition (!) der rabbinischen Schulen seit Jamnia weiterlebte."

de facto Hebrew canon corresponding to the later Jamnia canon was not even in existence at the time of Christ and the apostolic church. Several scholars now maintain that in the days of Jesus and the apostles the Jewish canon consisted of a closed collection of Law, a closed collection of Prophets, and a third large undifferentiated number of Jewish writings including the books later defined as the Hagiographa, writings later called Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha, and other books known to us only by name. Since Christianity arose in Palestine and became separated from Judaism between 30 A.D. and 70 A.D., some twenty years before Jamnia, such scholars submit that Christianity inherited a fluid, rather than a fixed, situation with respect to the third section of the Hebrew canon.⁶ Moreover, it is clear from the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, that the early church did not feel itself bound to the Masoretic text or canon.⁷ While

⁶This thesis has most recently been advanced by Albert C. Sundberg, The Old Testament of the Early Church, Harvard Theological Studies XX, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). Sundberg's basic thesis was set forth earlier in his article with the same title in Harvard Theological Review, LI (1958), 205-226. A similar argument was proposed already by G. Hölscher, Kanonisch und Apokryph, Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Kanons (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1905). A related thesis is advanced by Peter Katz, "The Old Testament Canon in Palestine and Alexandria," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLVII (1956), 191-217. This position is also maintained by Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, translated by Peter Ackroyd (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 560-571. On the other hand, some arguments for holding that the canon was closed at the time of Jesus are presented by Bleddyn J. Roberts "The Old Testament Canon: A Suggestion," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XLVI (1963), 164-178. F. Hesse, "Das Alte Testament als Kanon," Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie, III (1961), 327, sees the received canon of the Old Testament as an accidental collection, and states: "Keinesfalls können wir sagen, nur in einer kanonischen Schrift sei Gottes Wort zu finden, . . . in einer ausserkanonischen Schrift dagegen nicht."

⁷Alfred Jepsen, "Kanon und Text des Alten Testaments," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXIV (1949), 73, writes, "Wenn nun die Urgemeinde den masoretischen Text und Kanon noch nicht gekannt, zum mindesten sich nicht nur an diese gebunden gewusst hat, wie die Benutzung des Septuagintatextes

the thesis of Sundberg and others is not conclusive in all details, and by no means proves that the early church made no distinctions of authority within its Old Testament, it does suggest that an important sixteenth century argument for according the Old Testament apocrypha an inferior status can no longer be used so confidently.

But if modern scholarship has questioned this aspect of the sixteenth century understanding of the data of tradition on the canon, it has also revealed various weaknesses in the sixteenth century Roman Catholic understanding of the prior decisions of popes and councils. It is doubtful, for example, whether the Council of Laodicea adopted a canonical list. The appeal to the Council of Carthage and the Augustinian list of canonical books as favoring an undifferentiated canon is no longer convincing. Augustine clearly spoke of canonical distinctions and the canon of the Councils of Carthage was intended to differentiate what might be read in the church from heretical and apocryphal literature, rather than to place all canonical books on the same level. The authority of the often cited decrees of Popes Innocent I, Gelasius, and Damasus is also open to serious question. Innocent's list was contained in a pastoral letter to an individual, was not generally known for several years, and probably was never intended to establish an article of faith. It, too, can be interpreted as distinguishing those books which may be safely read in the church from all others, rather than as assigning equality to all named books. The so-called

und weniger aussermasoretischer Textstellen zeigt, was ist dann für die Kirche der Reformation heute Altes Testament? Eine einseitige Bindung an Kanon und Text der Synagoge erscheint bei dem in NT vorliegenden Tatbestande nicht möglich. Vielmehr ist eine Antwort auf die gestellte Frage nur von einer Klarstellung des neutestamentlichen Urteils über die der Urgemeinde überkommene Schrift aus zu gewinnen."

decrees of Gelasius and Damasus have both been proved to be forgeries, however well-intended, first prepared many years after those popes were in office. The canonical decree of the Council of Florence was in reality a confession of faith prepared by Pope Eugenius IV and published by the council, but it is doubtful whether it claimed the status of a binding article of faith, or intended to eliminate distinctions of authority within the listed canon.

Perhaps more significant than such inaccuracies, however, were the theories that governed the use of such data. In general, it can be said that humanists, Protestants, and some early Roman Catholics followed a basically historical understanding of ecclesiastical tradition, while official Roman Catholicism employed tradition dogmatically. Protestantism attempted to use the date of history to furnish data for historical conclusions. This is particularly well-expressed by Chemnitz, who required documentation from the early church's tradition for the decisions of the later church, and emphasized that only historical evidence could remove historical doubts. For such authors, the witness of early tradition enjoyed a privileged and higher status than later tradition because of its greater temporal proximity to the historical events in question. However, the official Roman Catholic concept of tradition was associated with dogmatic factors on two counts. On the one hand, the decisions of popes and councils were treated as dogmatically binding because of the divine authority allegedly residing in such persons or groups. On the other hand, Roman Catholicism reckoned with an incremental concept of tradition, whereby truths formerly uncertain or known only dimly could be known with certainty at a later date. This concept rested on the assumption that God was the inspirer of tradition no less than Scripture. This view was particularly

evident in the Roman Catholic acknowledgment that early Judaism, Christ, the apostles, and the primitive church did not receive the Septuagint additions to the Old Testament as canonical, and that the canonical status of such books did not become evident until the fourth century. The same principle was evident in the assertion that the New Testament antilegomena, doubted by the early church, could no longer be questioned because, with the progress of time and continued usage, the church had come to the conviction that they were divine, canonical, and authored by the apostles whom tradition had associated with them. Even the term "deuterocanonical," as used by Sixtus of Sienna and others, denoted later rather than inferior canonical status. This understanding of a growing consciousness of truth, even of historical details, was rejected in principle by Protestantism, who understood tradition as the historical witness to Scriptural truth and who preferred other arguments to justify their retention of books historically doubted.

The understanding and use of ecclesiastical tradition was intimately related to a key issue in the sixteenth century debate on the canon: the nature of the church's authority with reference to the Scriptures. On all sides, the role of the church in the formation of the canon was at least implicitly acknowledged. But the nature of that role was differently understood, as was the nature of the church itself. Roman Catholicism tended to identify the church with herself, and to regard her official decisions as binding on the faithful. Scripture and traditions were venerated, but as the primary sources for the church's pronouncements. In this respect, sixteenth century Catholicism was closer than its Protestant contemporaries to the medieval tradition. For Protestants, the church was not identical with the historic Roman institution, but consisted of all

believers in Christ in the past and present. The decrees and decisions of this church were binding on the faithful only because and insofar as they were based on the primary norm and deposit of faith, the Holy Scriptures. The church did not authenticate Scripture, nor was its authority superior to the Scriptures. Although the church had obviously existed prior to the writing of the New Testament, it was through the divine message of the Gospel now contained in the Scriptures that God had called the church into existence and continued to nourish her. For sixteenth century Protestants, the role of the church in the formation of the canon was that of a witness and recipient, and for historical reasons that role was assigned primarily to the primitive church. The present church's acceptance of the biblical books was thus dependent on the testimony of the earliest church, and was an act of confession rather than an authoritative dogmatic judgment. The sixteenth century Protestant use of tradition and the testimony of the early church in establishing the canon makes it clear that her sola scriptura principle did not intend to exclude a proper role for the confession and tradition of the church, but rather expressed the Protestant conviction that Holy Scripture has primary and ultimate authority in the church.

However, the use of the church's tradition on the canon proved to be historically inconclusive with regard to certain books. This was especially true of the New Testament antilegomena, for many regarded the verdict of early history on the Old Testament apocrypha to be conclusively negative. The sixteenth century witnessed various attempts to determine the status of those books where the evidence of history was divided. One solution was to attach a permanently dubious status to some or all of these books

solely on account of their failure to enjoy the full attestation of the early church. This was the approach of Karlstadt, Cajetan, Brenz, Flacius, Musculus, and Chemnitz, although their application of the principle varied from Brenz's exclusion of such books from the canon to the milder position of Cajetan and Chemnitz which accorded such books a doubtful, and therefore secondary, canonical status. In general this view, at least in theory, found greater favor among later Lutherans than among either Roman Catholic or Reformed theologians.

But throughout the century, others held that the dubious attestation of history was in itself an insufficient basis for such a negative judgment, and therefore attempted to resolve the doubts of history through non-historical methodology. The approach of many Roman Catholics, as we have seen, was to resolve such doubts by appealing to a later tradition better informed by the Holy Spirit. The humanistic approach attempted a form of literary criticism and analysis to determine whether the style and general contents of the disputed books were consistent with the acknowledged books or betrayed evidence of non-apostolic authorship. More unique was the attempt of Luther to reach a verdict on the apostolicity and consequent canonicity of such books by analyzing their dogmatic content and comparing it with that of the unquestioned apostolic writings, all of which revealed that the proclamation of Christ was the essential content of the apostolic message. The resulting judgments of Luther and the humanists were favorable to some of the disputed books, and unfavorable to others.

But this approach was not generally acceptable to the sixteenth century. The humanistic discovery of differences in style or general content could be countered with the argument that an apostle had used different

scribes, or that a later disciple had composed the actual text on the basis of his master's notes, or that a book was written in one language by the apostle and later translated into Greek by someone else. Luther's approach was perhaps best answered by John Calvin, who asked why all sacred authors must write about the same thing, and pointed out that the church needs the variety of messages it has received from God. While it is inaccurate to claim Luther's Christ-content principle as a means for distinguishing the normative from the peripheral in Scripture,⁸ it is nevertheless true that his critique recognized value distinctions within the canon. In his emphasis that the chief content of Scripture is its witness to Christ and that its chief purpose is soteriological rather than informational, Luther made an important contribution to the church's use of Holy Scripture. However, his application of the chief content and purpose of Scripture to the

⁸See, for example, Ernst Käsemann, "Begründet der neutestamentliche Kanon die Einheit der Kirche?", Evangelische Theologie, XI (1951), 13-21. Käsemann answers his question negatively because "der neutestamentliche Kanon steht nicht zwischen Judentum und Fröhenkatholizismus, sondern gewährt in sich wie dem Judentum, so auch dem Fröhenkatholizismus Raum und Basis" (p. 19). His solution is to follow Luther's Gospel criterion and measure the contents of Scripture against this norm, for the biblical canon is the Word of God only "insofern als er Evangelium ist und wird" (p. 21). An English translation by W. J. Montague appears in Essays on New Testament Themes (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1964), pp. 95-107.

A similar thesis is expressed by Werner Georg Kümmel, "Notwendigkeit und Grenze des Neutestamentlichen Kanons," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, XLVII (1950), 277-313. Kümmel states: "Der Entscheid der Alten Kirche über den Umfang des Kanons ist vielmehr für uns der einzig mögliche Ausgangspunkt für die notwendige Besinnung über die Frage, was nun wirklich innerhalb des gegebenen Kanons Norm für den Glauben sein kann und muss. . . . Und das kann ja nur heissen: der Kanon ist Norm für die Verkündigung der Kirche und damit für den Glauben, insoweit und nur insoweit er solches Christuszeugnis ist. Es kann also gar keine Frage sein, dass Luthers Grundsatz völlig richtig ist, dass kanonisch sei, 'was Christum prediget und treibet.' Nur bleibt die Frage zu beantworten, wie dieser Grundsatz konkret angewandt werden könne" (pp. 307-308).

For a brief discussion of similar statements in other contemporary Protestants, see Appel, pp. 332-344.

question of the canon was not an independent criterion of canonicity.

But the various understandings of the data, function, and adequacy of the church's tradition on the canon were not the only factors involved in the sixteenth century debate. When the various criteriological emphases are viewed within the large context of the debate, it becomes possible to discern large areas of interconfessional agreement and to recognize that several emphases were undoubtedly exaggerated by the heat of the discussion. Before we discuss areas of interconfessional criteriological agreement, two factors in the general context of the debate need to be recognized: the common quest for certainty and the polemically charged atmosphere.

After the initial humanistic and reformation critique of the canon, it became apparent how closely the discussion of the canon was associated with the quest for certainty in matters of faith. Humanism and particularly the reformation had shattered the tranquility of the church and challenged many of her cherished institutions and beliefs. The criticism of traditionally canonical books as well as the denial of the church's right to determine canonicity were among the many factors which appeared to threaten the stability and authority of the church. Understandably, Roman Catholics reacted to the challenge by reaffirming their conviction that the church is the pillar and foundation of all truth, and that its decisions were beyond correction. Protestants, too, were involved in the quest for certainty. No longer a part of the official church, they had to justify their separate existence as well as their claim to catholicity without benefit of the traditional ecclesiastical authority. They found the basis of their certainty in Holy Scripture. But that basis of certainty, too, needed to be shielded from all doubt. Doubtful books thus were either denied full canonical status (at least in theory), or were

simply acknowledged as inspired on the basis of the Spirit's internal witness and treated as certain divine truth. Chemnitz' goal of establishing a "certain rule of faith and sound doctrine" in the church was not peculiarly his own, for others voiced similar sentiments. While Catholics found that "certain rule" in the decisions of the authoritative church and Protestants found it in Holy Scripture, both of them had come to associate the "rule of faith" more and more with dogmatic truth, and to emphasize that the proper cognitive understanding of the Word of God is a primary element in Christian certainty. The accents of Luther, who found his certainty in the Gospel of forgiveness realized by a faith of the heart that struggled with and hopefully overcame intellectual doubts, were not often stressed by many of his contemporaries and successors.

A sober consideration of the issues involved in the sixteenth century discussion of the canon was often adversely affected by the polemical nature of many treatments of the problem. The Roman Catholic polemic reflected the fears awakened by the humanistic and reformation critique of the canon, and was directed as much against Catholics like Erasmus and Cajetan as against the reformers. Roman Catholics claimed that only heretics denied the canonicity of the church's Bible, and they cited instances from the history of the church to prove their point. That reformation criticisms of II Maccabees and James were associated with the rejection of purgatory, the invocation of saints, the sacrament of extreme unction, and the role of human effort in justification only deepened their conviction that canonical criticism was a heretical practice. Many Roman Catholics also doubted the integrity of the Jewish community in preserving the Old Testament canon and text, suspecting them of deliberately removing such books as Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus from the canon because of their prophecy

of Christ. Thus critics of the received canon were associated with heretics and Jews, the bitter enemies of the church. Furthermore, such criticisms were thought to contradict the church's tradition and to defy the authoritative decisions of popes and councils. And they were all audaciously private views, set forth without the consent and approbation of the church whose province it was to decide such matters of faith. Not surprisingly, the early criticisms of the canon, whether from Protestants or fellow Roman Catholics, were seen on many counts to be an affront against the church, and were resisted with bitterness and the counter-assertion of absolute ecclesiastical supremacy. But the polemic was two-sided, for Protestants reacted to such polemical assaults with the charge that Roman Catholicism had arrogated to herself the power to sit in judgment over the Scriptures, even to the point of ignoring the historical evidence of early Christian tradition. Thus the canon discussion, although viewed as a problem in its own right, was so entangled in the web of suspicion and fear, that it was often treated as an illustration of either arrogant heresy or usurped ecclesiastical authority.

But the often exaggerated polemics on both sides should not blind us to major areas of consensus in the criteriology of canonicity. This is especially apparent in the common emphasis on prophetic and apostolic authorship, the divine inspiration of Scripture, and the role of the Holy Spirit in leading men to receive the Scriptures as divine. The concept of prophetic and apostolic authorship figured strongly in the discussions of the canon in all three confessional traditions. All were convinced that God had spoken in a special way through his prophets in the Old Testament, and they found considerable support for this conviction in the New Testament, the Nicene Creed, and the whole tradition of the church. Following

the lead of the New Testament, however, they did not define "prophet" in a narrow sense, but included in that category men such as David, Solomon, and Moses. In the New Testament, they were convinced from the words of Jesus and the claims of the apostles that the resurrected Christ had commissioned the apostles to be his unique spokesmen and witnesses. Books whose apostolic authorship was uncertain therefore raised the question whether their contents truly contained the message of Christ. Yet the sixteenth century gave no uniform interpretation to either "apostolic" or "authorship." A few were prepared to limit "apostolic" to the chosen twelve disciples and Paul, and accordingly were forced to regard such books as Mark, Luke, and Acts as the indirect products of Peter and Paul. Others defined "apostolic" more broadly, so that any leader of the primitive church could be included in that designation. The concept of "authorship" was also given broad definition, so that a writing approved or authorized by an apostle, or even composed by one of his disciples, could still be included in that category. In all such definitions, however, a connection with the historic apostolate was strenuously maintained by all spokesmen of the century. This broad concept of "authorship" was also applied to the Old Testament by men like Karlstadt and Luther, who could reckon with the later editing of such books as the Pentateuch and still regard it as Moses' book. Theoretically, the emphasis on apostolic authorship was less crucial for Roman Catholicism, which also maintained the divine inspiration and ultimate apostolic basis of later ecclesiastical tradition. In practice, however, Roman Catholic spokesmen, including the Council of Trent, placed great stress on the actual apostolic authorship of even the contested books.

Closely associated with the concept of apostolic and prophetic

authorship, however broadly defined, was the common belief that God himself had spoken and still speaks in Holy Scripture. The inspiration of Scripture was emphasized not only by such Protestants as Karlstadt, Bullinger, Chemnitz, and the Reformed confessions, but also by many Roman Catholic theologians and the Council of Trent. Although they did not greatly emphasize inspiration as such, also Luther and the Lutheran confessions clearly held that Holy Scripture was God's Word. But in spite of their common conviction that Scripture is divine, none of the three churches was interested in defining or describing the technique of inspiration, or in eliminating the human side of Scripture. Nevertheless, different emphases in the concept of inspiration became apparent in the discussions of the canon. Many Catholic theologians opposed any distinction of authority within the canon on the grounds that all canonical books were divinely inspired, while others, like Seripando and Driedo, could affirm distinctions of authority within the inspired canon because they recognized different levels or degrees of inspiration. In the early part of the century, Reformed theologians tended to emphasize divine inspiration more strongly than their Lutheran contemporaries, but this emphasis had become the common characteristic of both Protestant traditions in the latter part of the century. Yet this emphasis had different effects on the canon: in Reformed theology, it was generally accompanied by the absence of distinctions within the New Testament, while later Lutherans generally preferred to relegate the questioned books to an inferior status. Whether the assurance of inspiration was gained through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit or the judgment of the church, it could lead both Erasmus and Beza to assert that uncertain human authorship was insignificant compared to the assurance of divine authorship. For all three confessional traditions, the

belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture made the Bible a unique book, and caused the issue of the biblical canon to be a crucial one.

The understanding of Holy Scripture as the Word of God himself had its corollary in the Protestant emphasis, particularly expressed by Reformed theologians, that Scripture could be recognized as divine only by the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. This tenet was developed partially in opposition to the Roman claim that the church authenticates Scripture, and partially from the Protestant understanding of the nature of Scripture. With Roman Catholicism in mind, Luther and Karlstadt already asserted that no one could give a writing more authority than it possessed of itself. Calvin, Chemnitz, and other Protestant theologians also taught that Scripture is self-authenticating, emphasizing that in the use of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit, Scripture's primary author, leads men to accept that Scripture as divine -- an assurance that no historical investigation or ecclesiastical authority could ultimately give. Although sometimes understood as a principle of canonicity, particularly among Reformed Christians,⁹ the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit was not intended as such by either Luther or Calvin. For them, this emphasis was both a polemical assertion and a confession of faith that canonicity, understood in its deepest sense as the personal acceptance of God's Scriptural address to man, cannot be effected or recognized except

⁹This impression is given especially by the Confessio Gallicana of 1559; cf. supra, pp. 244-245. But even this article acknowledges the importance of "the common accord and consent of the church" for knowing which books are canonical. Rupert E. Davies, The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), pp. 143-144, points out that the final wording of this article departed from Calvin's earlier proposal. Davies also argues that the internal witness of the Holy Spirit was not a principle of canonicity for Calvin.

through God's own agency. In principle, this emphasis was not foreign to Roman Catholics, for they also claimed the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their recognition of Scripture as divine, as in all decisions of the church involving the faith and life of God's people. Catholics, however, tended to apply the guidance of the Spirit primarily to their corporate decisions and practice, while the reformers gave it a more individualistic and personalistic application. Such differences of application were hardly antithetical, however, for in both instances they underscored the limitations of human resources.

The preceding paragraphs reveal the complexity of the sixteenth century discussion of the canon. Historical investigation, literary analysis, ecclesiastical tradition, evangelical content, the witness of the Holy Spirit, prophetic and apostolic authorship, and divine inspiration were all factors employed in the discussion of the canon, and several of them were usually involved in each treatment. But in spite of the complexity of the issue and the polemical atmosphere in which it was debated, it is evident that the three major confessions shared many aspects of their understanding of the biblical canon. They were agreed that Holy Scripture is uniquely God's book and invested with divine authority. They acknowledged the need for historical investigation of the church's tradition in determining which books were to be received as apostolic and prophetic. There was virtually no disagreement on which books belonged in the Bible, and even the criticism of questioned books was much the same, whether expressed by early Roman Catholic, Reformed or Lutheran theologians. And they all recognized that historical factors alone were insufficient to establish the conviction that God himself spoke in the Bible.

In spite of widespread agreement in such general convictions, two

interrelated areas of general Protestant-Roman Catholic disagreement have become evident from our study: the concepts of tradition and dogma. The sixteenth century Roman Catholic use of tradition raised the question whether the church's guidance by the Holy Spirit can lead her to a deeper awareness of factual truth than is evidenced by the historical data. Even if it is acknowledged that in particular situations of crisis the church has been granted a deeper insight into truths having a Scriptural basis (such as the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas), can this principle also be applied to questions lacking that basis, such as the precise extent of Scripture itself? With its affirmative answer to this question, the Council of Trent was able to make the extent of the canon a dogma, and threaten all dissenters with the anathema. Protestantism, on the other hand, did not acknowledge an incremental and inspired concept of tradition, but chose to evaluate the church's tradition by means of the norm of Holy Scripture. For Protestants, nothing could have the status of a dogma that did not have a sufficient basis in Scripture. Thus the extent of the canon, while differing little from the traditional canon of the church, could not become a dogma for Protestants in the same sense as the central truths of the Christian faith. In the light of their own experience of including a canonical list in various confessions of faith, particularly Reformed Christians should have little difficulty in regarding the decree of Trent as a confession of sixteenth century conviction about the extent of the canon. But unless Roman Catholics interpret the Tridentine decree in a similar way, rather than as a dogma, contemporary Protestants who are guided by their sixteenth century fathers may well continue to feel that the Roman Catholic Church intends to reflect a dogmatic authority and competence in this matter that is not clearly hers.

Christian discussion of the biblical canon will doubtlessly continue to employ the heritage of the sixteenth century. The humanistic concern for historical investigation, the Lutheran emphasis on the Christ-content of Holy Scripture, the Roman Catholic accent on the church as the community of faithful response to the divine message, and the Reformed stress on the guidance of the Holy Spirit are all precious factors in the common Christian commitment to the Lordship of Christ in the church and the world. The problem of the biblical canon remains both historical and religious. History can at best supply the data relative to the formation of the canon, and such data will continue to be indispensable. But the personal and ecclesial adherence to a normative collection of Holy Scriptures is ultimately a religious commitment and an act of faith. Such a commitment will continue to exist where men who confess the Christ of Scripture are nourished by the Spirit through the Word in the community of faith.

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